



OPINION 6

MESSI CONFRONTS CHINA
IN HIS OWN WAY

WORLD 8

ISRAELI DRONE STRIKE
IN LEBANON KILLS 2

MONEY 10

MARKET CAP OF 4 MOST VALUED
FIRMS JUMPS ₹2.18 LAKH CRORE

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WAS BOOMBALL,
SAYS ASHWIN
11 SPORTS

DELHI BRACES UP FOR FARMERS ONSLAUGHT

RAJESH KUMAR ■
NEW DELHI

In a bid to avoid a re-run of the 2020 Farmers' protest in the Delhi-NCR, the Haryana and the Delhi Police have left no stone unturned to prevent any untoward situation for the farmers' 'Chalo Delhi' protest scheduled to be held on Tuesday. Large cement barricades, nails punched on access roads, suspension of internet and bulk SMS services, and heavy police deployment to block the farmers have been put in place at the borders.

The Centre has invited representatives of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (non-political) and the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha to hold another meeting to discuss their demands on February 12. Three Union Ministers — Piyush Goyal, Arjun Munda and Nityanand Rai, will hold talks with farmers' in Chandigarh. The meeting will be held at the Mahatma Gandhi State Institute of Public Administration in Sector 26. Meanwhile, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann has accused the Haryana Government of creating a border "between Punjab and India", referring to the concrete blocks, nails and barbed wire placed on some roads to scuttle the farmers' proposed 'Delhi Chalo' march. He said the Manohar Khattar-led Haryana Government has placed as much barbed wire at the State's borders with Punjab as there is at the country's border with Pakistan. Khattar, however,



Security personnel deployed at Ghazipur border in view of farmers' Delhi Chalo March, in New Delhi, on Sunday. A large number of farmers from Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Punjab are expected to march towards the national Capital on Tuesday

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justified the steps taken by his Government to seal the State's borders and stop Punjab farmers from marching towards the national Capital, saying the arrangements are aimed at maintaining law and order. The Delhi Police has issued prohibitory orders under section 144, which bars large gatherings, were imposed in the northeast district and is making every attempt to avoid the unfortunate January 26, 2021 incident wherein protesting farmers clashed with the Delhi Police and

one particular wing of the tractor rally, led by Deep Sidhu, moved to Red Fort causing chaos in the national Capital. Apprehending the disturbance of peace, Haryana has sealed the border with Punjab at Shambhu border on GT Road border (National Highway-44) which falls between Punjab's Patiala and Haryana's Ambala districts, also suspended mobile internet services and bulk SMS in seven districts — Ambala, Kurukshetra, Kaithal, Jind, Hisar, Fatehabad and Sirsa — from February 11 to

13. In a notification, the Haryana Government said dogle services provided on mobile phones, will remain suspended and only voice calls would go through. In Sonipat, the district administration has asked fuel pump owners to not fill up bottles or other containers. A 10-litre cap has been introduced for tractors. The administration has warned that providing fuel to those associated with the farmers' protest will attract action.

Elaborate arrangements are in place at the borders in Jind and Fatehabad districts to stop the march.

Sources said the Delhi Police are blocking the city's borders with Haryana by placing massive containers. Cranes have been deployed to move these barriers if farmers try to cross into Delhi. In fact, Haryana too has brought in cement barriers to ensure that the protesting farmers cannot enter Delhi. In Delhi, cops are holding drills to practise firing teargas shells if farmers refuse to stop. A video shows the Delhi Police lining up and firing teargas shells in an open area in north Delhi. The exercise, meanwhile, has left local residents in discomfort. Many of them complained of burning sensation in their eyes after the drill. The Delhi Police is also keeping a close watch on social media in the run-up to the protest.

The Samyukta Kisan Morcha (non-political) and the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha had announced the 'Delhi Chalo' march by more than 200 farmers' unions on February 13 to press the Centre into accepting several demands, including the enactment of a law to guarantee a minimum support price (MSP) for crops, implementation of the Swaminathan Commission's recommendations, provision of pensions for farmers and farm laborers, forgiveness of farm debts, withdrawal of police charges, and seeking justice for victims of the Lakhimpur Kheri violence.



Deserted Janata Dal (United) office ahead of the floor test of Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar-led Government in Patna on Sunday

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All eyes on Bihar Floor test

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ PATNA /
NEW DELHI

Ahead of the floor test for the newly aligned Nitish Kumar-led NDA Government on Monday, while political parties were busy keeping their members together through sumptuous meals, antakshari, and indoor games, all eyes are also focused on the role of incumbent Speaker Avadh Bhari Chaudhary, an RJD member, and Jitan Ram Manjhi-led HAM, a constituent of the present Nitish regime. Sources indicate that Chief Minister Nitish Kumar himself is apprehensive of potential cross-voting by some of his party MLAs who have reportedly been unreachable since last week. The JD(U) chief is seemingly facing internal dissent within the party for his frequent changes in stance, treating the party as his personal fiefdom, and his recent decision to replace his close confidant and predecessor Lallan Singh as the chief of JD(U). Another former JD(U) president

and once a close aide to Nitish, RCP Singh, is also aiming to sideline Nitish from Bihar politics entirely. RCP, who was part of Narendra Modi's Cabinet as a JD(U) partner and has now joined the BJP.

The Bihar Assembly has a total strength of 243, with the majority mark set at 122. The NDA holds a comfortable majority with 128 seats, comprising 78 from BJP, 45 from JD(U), 4 from Hindustani Awam Morcha, and Independent MLA Sumit Singh. On the other side, led by RJD's Tejashwi Yadav, efforts are underway to "woo" 14 legislators, as the party remains the largest in the Bihar Assembly with 79 MLAs, followed by the Congress with 19, Left parties with 18, and the lone AIMM also in the Mahagathbandhan. Sources indicate that Manjhi had a meeting with an emissary of RJD supremo Lalu Prasad a day earlier, and now he is attempting to exert his influence with four MLAs in his camp, including the former's son, who was sworn in as part of the newly formed Nitish Ministry.



Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath with Deputy Chief Ministers KP Maurya and Brajesh Pathak, UP Assembly Speaker Satish Mahana and State legislators during a visit to the Ram Temple in Ayodhya on Sunday

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Yogi takes politicians on a spiritual odyssey

KAMLESH SRIVASTAVA ■ AYODHYA

In response to the call of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Assembly Speaker Satish Mahana, MLAs from various political affiliations, barring the Samajwadi Party, ventured on a spiritual odyssey to Ayodhya to pay homage to Lord Ram. Expressing gratitude for the opportunity, the MLAs commended Yogi and Mahana for extending the invitation. "I am overwhelmed to be present at the 'Darbar' of Lord Ram. My dream has come true," Mahana told reporters after his temple visit. He reflected on the evolution of the site, from its humble origins to the grandeur it stands as today. "I never envisioned the temple would be such a majestic structure reflecting our religious and cultural ethos," he said. Accompanied by Ministers and legislators from the ruling

coalition, Opposition members from parties including the BSP, the RLD, and the Congress set aside political disparities to partake in the collective reverence for Lord Ram. Luxurious buses provided by the Transport Corporation facilitated the journey, resonating with the chanting of Ramdhun and adorned with vibrant flowers, creating a serene ambiance. Refreshments were provided for comfort, alongside thoughtful tokens of remembrance like diaries, pens, and calendars for each MLA. As flower petals showered the luxurious buses upon arrival in Ayodhya, the journey symbolised a historic milestone, embodying the realisation of a centuries-old dream — the construction of the grand temple of Lord Ram. The unity displayed by the Government and MLAs across the political spectrum was praised as a testament to Yogi's visionary leadership.

Modi: Congress anti tribal, Uses them only during elections

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ BHOPAL

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said he is confident the BJP will cross the 370 seats mark in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls, and even the Opposition leaders in Parliament are saying the ruling coalition will get more than 400 seats. He was addressing a public meeting of tribal community members in Madhya Pradesh's Jhabua district. Modi alleged the Congress was anti-tribal and thought of villages, farmers and the poor only during elections. He said he had got overwhelming love from the people as he visited the temples associated with Lord Ram in the South of the country. Aware of their imminent defeat,

the Congress and its allies are resorting to last ditch-tactics, the PM said, adding that "loot and divide" is the motto of the Congress. "The Congress when it is in power indulges in loot, while out of power engineers divisions (in society) based on language, region and caste," he said here. The Congress has drowned in its own sins and the more it will make efforts to come up the further it will slide down, the PM asserted. It got decimated in the 2023 (Assembly polls) and will be wiped out in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls, he said. "The people showed the mirror to the Congress in the Assembly polls. The mood of the nation is similar in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls," Modi asserted. The PM asked voters to ensure



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Madhya Pradesh Governor Mangu Bhai Patel, Chief Minister Mohan Yadav and others at the dedication and foundation stone laying ceremony of various development projects during Janjatiya Sammelan in Jhabua, Madhya Pradesh on Sunday

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polling of additional 370 votes in each booth, compared to the last elections, for the Bharatiya Janata

Party (BJP) to win 370 seats, out of the 543 Lok Sabha seats. Even the Opposition leaders in

Parliament are now saying "abki baar 400 paar" for the (BJP-led) National Democratic Alliance (NDA), he said. "I am sure the BJP's lotus symbol will cross the 370-mark on its own," Modi said. The PM said he has not come to Jhabua to campaign for the Lok Sabha elections, but as the "sevak" to thank the people for their overwhelming support in the recent Assembly elections. The BJP recently won the Assembly polls in MP, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh with a thumping majority. "Our 'double engine' Government is working with double speed in Madhya Pradesh," he said referring to the ₹7,550 crore development projects which he launched before addressing the meeting.

RAJYA SABHA NOMINATIONS

Parties unfold their cards

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With the elections for vacant seats in the Rajya Sabha scheduled this month, the BJP and the TMC announced their candidates on Sunday. The BJP released a list of 14 candidates for the forthcoming Rajya Sabha elections from Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and West Bengal. The list includes Sudhanshu Trivedi, and former Congress leader RPN Singh from Uttar Pradesh, with former Haryana BJP

chief Subhash Barala announced as the candidate from Haryana. The Trinamool Congress nominated journalist Sagarika Ghose among its candidates for the biennial polls on February 27. In Uttar Pradesh, besides Sudhanshu Trivedi, former BJP MLA Sadhna Singh, and RPN Singh, the other candidates are Chaudhary Tejveer Singh, Amarpal Maurya, Sangita Balwant, and Navin Jain. RPN Singh, a former Congress leader from the politically important Kurmi caste, joined the BJP in 2022.

The State has the highest number of vacancies with 10 seats. None of the Union Ministers whose terms are ending were named in the list, indicating a strong possibility that many of them will contest the Lok Sabha polls. However, the party is yet to name several candidates. Union Minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar, representing Karnataka in the Rajya Sabha, and BJP chief spokesperson and media head Anil Baluni, the outgoing MP from Uttarakhand, have not been nominated.

Pak parties intensify efforts to form coalition Government

PNS ■ ISLAMABAD/LAHORE

The three main political parties in Pakistan on Sunday intensified their efforts for the formation of a coalition Government after it became clear that the coup-prone country faced a hung Parliament after general elections marred by allegations of rigging. The general elections were held on Thursday, but the unusual delay in the announcement of results vitiated the atmosphere as several parties cried foul and some resorted to protests. Former prime minister and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz supremo Nawaz Sharif received the backing of the powerful Pakistan Army chief General Asim Munir on Saturday for his call for a unity Government to pull Pakistan out of its current difficulties.

Humans continue to invade sacred forests, their inhabitants

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The Pioneer's report published recently that Kerala was fast becoming the graveyard for wild animals is being substantiated by the State's Forest Department, an institution set up to protect jungles and wild animals. The entire population in Wayanad district has demanded a "death sentence" for a wild tusker that killed a 47-year-old man in Mananthawadi, a forest suburb, on Saturday.

Residents insist that the Forest Department should eliminate the elephant, either by shooting it or relocating it to a safer area. However, recent incidents prove that the Forest Department does not have qualified veterinary specialists for tranquilising the elephant. "A few weeks ago, we saw an elephant known as 'Thanneer



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Komban' succumbing to a tranquilising shot administered by the Forest Department's veterinary surgeon. No investigation was conducted to determine the cause of the pachyderm's death," said V K Venkitachalam, chairman of the Heritage Animal Task Force, an organisation in Thrissur dedicated to wildlife welfare. Venkitachalam noted that the death of Thanneer Komban, reportedly tranquilised by a Government veterinarian,

could be attributed to outdated tranquiliser. "The tranquilising pistol and drug have expired, and there is no official record indicating the provision of new tranquiliser. Additionally, there is a shortage of qualified veterinarians to tranquilise elephants or other wild animals," he added. The past two months saw a leopard and a wild boar being killed within minutes of receiving tranquiliser shots, which Venkitachalam considers a strange coincidence.

A K Saseendran, Kerala Minister for Forest and wild Life, who celebrated his 78th birthday on January 29 remained incommunicado for hours and ordered the tusker be tranquilised at the earliest and shifted to Muthanga Elephant Camp. However, the Minister was non-committal regarding the mission's timing. Local residents in Mananthawadi, many of whom reside on forest land allocated to them by regional political parties, blamed the Forest Department for the

elephant's intrusion into residential areas. Venkitachalam countered, saying the animals' habitat has diminished due to the Government's concessions to the forest mafia, who distribute forest land at their discretion. "There is a lack of water and vegetation for elephants and other wild animals, prompting them to encroach upon human settlements in search of sustenance. We cannot blame wild animals for their efforts to survive," he said.

Double engine govt working with double speed in MP: Modi

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said that the Central Government has been dedicated to upliftment of tribal people, enhancing pride and dignity in the last ten years. Madhya Pradesh is the best example in the country to show how effectively double engine government is working. He was addressing the tribal convention in Jhabua today. He inaugurated and laid the foundation stone of development projects worth about Rs 7500 crore. Prime Minister Modi said that the Jhabua Yatra's purpose of expressing gratitude to the people of the state who honoured commitment towards development in the Assembly poll. He expressed confidence that the commitment of the people towards development will stay

firm. The Central Government is determined to live up to the public trust. Modi said that projects worth crores of rupees inaugurated in Madhya Pradesh including Jhabua, Khargone, Alirajpur, Dhar, Barwani, funds released under Adarsh Gaon Yojana for the betterment of villages, big rail projects for better connectivity, Ratlam and Meghnagar railway stations. Development works like modernization of the Railways and giving Rs 1500-1500 in the accounts of two lakh sisters and daughters of the tribal society show that the double engine government is working double fast in Madhya Pradesh. The credit for this mega campaign of development goes to the public. Modi announced Krantisurya Tanta Bhil University in the name of Tanta Mama.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi met the tribal people in Gopalpura of tribal dominated area Jhabua. He visited the exhibition focused on development works. Modi reached the stage accepting greetings from the tribal brothers at the huge Kumbh. Governor Mangubhai Patel, Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav, Union Ministers Arjun Munda and Faggan Singh Kulaste, former Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan, Ministers, Khajuraho MP V.D. Sharma, National President of Tribal Morcha Sameer Uram and public representatives were present. On this occasion, a short film focusing on Krantisurya Tanta Bhil University was also screened. People from Gujarat, Rajasthan and Maharashtra including Madhya Pradesh par-

ticipated in the huge Tribal Mahakumbh. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while saluting the tribal community who had come in large numbers with the slogan of Baba Dungar Dev Ki Jai, said that Jhabua is connected to Gujarat too. The hearts of the people of Jhabua remain connected to Gujarat. Referring to the tribal culture practices, he extended extended best wishes on Bhagoria Utsav. Modi said that Madhya Pradesh is moving fast on the path of development. Earlier it was counted as the sick state. The government of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee created a new ministry for tribal welfare and made special provisions in the budget giving priority to the development of tribal areas and tribal people. Modi said that the Central

Government made a record increase in the minimum support price on forest produce. The forest produce covered under MSP was increased from 10 to 90. Van Dhan Kendras would be opened in the country so that tribal products could get good markets. Tribal society is the pride of the country and the guarantee of the country's bright future. Development of tribal people is our guarantee. It is the government's resolve to make their dreams come true. The Prime Minister said that the government has decided to celebrate the birth anniversary of Bhagwan Birsa Munda. Martyrdom Day is celebrated today remembering the sacrifice of Tanta Mama and Krantisurya Tanta Bhil University is being announced in his name.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Chief Minister Mohan Yadav waves at a crowd during a Jantiyati Sammelan in Jhabua, Madhya Pradesh on Sunday. Pioneer photo

Two vehicle-lifters arrested, 6 bikes seized

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Khajuri police nabbed vehicle lifter and recovered stolen two wheeler from wedding venues after tracking stolen two wheeler from wedding venues organised at these spots; 6 motor cycles worth Rs 3 lakh have been recovered from the accused in the action. During the night patrol vehicle checking on February 8 in Khajuri road police station two suspicious persons were on motorbike without registration number and when they were stopped and later when the suspect was taken to police station and engine number of the vehicle was checked on the VDP portal at the police station. HA10AGJHL06822 and chassis number on checking MBL-HAR080JHL02756 and vehicle number MP04QF9088 was found which was found to be a stolen vehicle. The accused were identified as

Satish Menwada father became Singh Menwada(19), Rohit Purvia(21) of Sehore, and when interrogated about the crime, they e admitted to committing the crime. During the investigation, team interrogated the arrested accused in connection with the theft of another vehicle, who confessed stealing vehicles from Shagun Garden Bhauri, Marriage Garden Baigradha Kala, Sundarban Marriage Garden Lalghati Bhopal and Gulshan Marriage Garden Sehore. Police station Khajuri Road team took action with immediate effect on the basis of the memorandum of the accused. Accused Rohit presented motorcycle number MP04YM6951 from his house which was found to be theft in crime number 29/24 section 379 of Indian Penal Code of Khajuri Road Police Station and was seized by the police. Taken and sold by the accused from different places.

Meanwhile Kohefiza police arrested a man and seized Rs 63 lakh of hawala money and a car in which the cash was carried, further details of the illegal money are under investigation, said police. Taking immediate action in the matter, the car was tracked and illegally carried Rs 63 lakh cash in car bearing registration number MP04EB8464. The nabbed driver was identified as Narendra Aggarwal of Sagar and inquiries are being made regarding the money. After the preliminary investigation a case under section 41(1-4) of the CrPC was registered and started the investigation. Police said that 124 bundles of 500 - 500 rupee notes, 100 notes in each bundle, total 12400 notes and 5 bundles of 200 - 200 rupee notes, 100 notes in each bundle, total 500 notes, thus total cash amount is Rs 63 lakh with KIA car vehicle registration number vehicle of MP04EB8464 was seized.

Heavy rains, hailstorm reported in Jabalpur, Umaria districts

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Heavy rainfall and hailstorm was witnessed in Jabalpur and Umaria of Madhya Pradesh on Sunday morning, hail storm was witnessed in Sohar village of Bargi tehsil in Jabalpur and among other regions Seoni and Mandla also witnessed rainfall which caused a lot of damage to crops. Water and thunder lightning in Narmadapuram, Chhindwara, Anuppur, Mandla, Balaghat on Saturday night was witnessed. According to the Meteorological Department, there are chances of clouds, rain and thunderstorms in Madhya Pradesh for the next 3 days. Winds of speed of 30 to 40 km/hour in the districts of Jabalpur-Narmadapuram division. The period of severe cold will start again from February 14. Night tempera-



ture may drop by 2 to 3 degrees Celsius. It rained heavily in the morning in Umaria which damaged crops in many villages. Meteorological Department, told that due to northern

winds, cold wave and cold day conditions persisted in the last 24 hours. A decline was also seen in the night temperature. Currently, cyclonic circulation is active around southern Gujarat. Trough line is also passing. This has also affected Madhya Pradesh. Datia had the lowest temperature in the state on Saturday night. The minimum mercury recorded here was 5.0 degrees Celsius. In Pachmarhi it was 13.4 degree Celsius. The highest minimum temperature was recorded in Seoni at 15.4 degrees Celsius. The night temperatures on Saturday recorded in big cities were Bhopal 12.4 (temperature in degrees Celsius), Indore 13, Gwalior 6.9, Jabalpur 12.8, Ujjain 12.7. The regions recorded night temperature less than 10 degree Celsius were Datia 5 (temperature in degrees Celsius), Khajuraho 7, Raigarh 8.2, Nagaon 8.5, Guna 9 and Rewa 9.4. Today, due to the trough line, south-easterly winds will remain strong. Showers may occur at isolated places in Narmadapuram, Jabalpur and Shahdol divisions. Strong wind is also expected. There may be light rain in Shahdol and Jabalpur divisions in February 12. There is also a forecast of strong wind. The system will weaken on February 13, but there may be isolated drizzle in Rewa and Sagar divisions.

Dr Malhotra lectures at AIIMS Bhubaneswar

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Dr Varun Malhotra, Additional Professor, Department of Physiology at AIIMS, Bhopal, delivered a captivating lecture at the PHYSIOMEET event held at AIIMS Bhubaneswar. The talk, which took place on February 9, 2024, shed light on the recent trends and future implications of physiological research in lifestyle disorders. AIIMS Bhopal runs a life style clinic - Integrated Health Centre under the aegis and guidance of dynamic Executive Director Prof. (Dr) Ajai Singh. Lifestyle disorders have emerged as a significant health concern globally, stemming from daily habits and choices such as diet, physical activity, and sleep patterns. Dr Malhotra emphasized the critical role of adopting healthier habits to prevent and manage conditions like obesity, diabetes, and heart disease, which are often linked to unhealthy lifestyles. Drawing attention to the rising prevalence of non communicable diseases (NCDs), he highlighted the urgent need for prevention and awareness efforts to combat what could potentially become a pandemic of chronic diseases. He underscored the interplay between genetic predisposition ("nature") and environmental factors ("nurture") in influencing individual susceptibility to lifestyle disorders, stressing the importance of addressing modifiable risk factors such as physical inactivity, diet, and smoking. Furthermore, Dr. Malhotra provided valuable insights into the practical aspects of lifestyle modification, offering guidance on nutrition, physical activity, stress management, and social connectivity. He presented a compelling case study illustrating the application of lifestyle medicine principles in addressing weight management and overall health improvement.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi along with Chief Minister Mohan Yadav and others waves at a crowd during a Jantiyati Sammelan in Jhabua, Madhya Pradesh on Sunday. Pioneer photo

CM pays tribute to Pt Deendayal Upadhyay

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav garlanded the statue of Pt. Deendayal Upadhyay at Lal Ghati and paid floral tributes. He said that today is a special day for all of us as it is the death anniversary of Pt. Deendayal Upadhyay, who, from the founding of Jan Sangh till his last breath, dedicated his entire life to propagate Indian culture not only in the country but in the entire world. The world knows this philosophy as a unitary human philosophy. The basic idea of this philosophy is to make every possible effort to bring changes in the lives of the poorest of the poor, provide them with basic facilities and make their life successful. For a leader like Pt. Deendayal Upadhyay, whose political journey was dedicated to the welfare of

all, the Samarpan Divas event is going to make us all proud. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav also contributed to the lifelong support fund collection started by the organization. The state government is ready to run like a double engine with the Center for development and public welfare Dr. Yadav said that we are fortunate to have a global leader and popular Prime Minister Narendra Modi amidst us in Jhabua, a backward tribal region of the state on the death anniversary of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay. Modi believes that to bring about a change in the lives of the most backward people, one has to be in their midst. Today a big Kumbh of tribal community is being organized in Jhabua. The vision of development of our illustrious Prime

Minister Modi in all spheres of life is coming true in Dhar-Jhabua also. It is our good fortune that Dhar-Jhabua has got three highways each, this area is covered by Super Express-way and will be at the center from where Delhi-Mumbai will be at an equal distance. Prime Minister Modi visualizes that all areas should get equal facilities like roads, air travel etc., and we are ready to work with the Central Government like a double engine on this vision. Paying tribute to Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay Dr. Yadav said that he prays to God that Indian culture should spread all over the world. Among others present in the programme were Minister Krishna Gaur, MLA Rameshwar Sharma, former Mayor Alok Sharma and Sumit Pachauri and other senior public representatives.

Information Commissioner asks GAD to take action against MPHB Comm

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Information Commission has taken stricter action after Madhya Pradesh Housing Board failed to reply RTI after two years, GAD has been asked to take action against IAS Shukla. It has proved costly for Madhya Pradesh Housing Board for not giving the information sought in RTI to the elderly applicant of Gwalior. Taking a tough stand, the Information Commission has recommended disciplinary action to the General Administration Department against Board Commissioner Chandramauli Shukla for disobeying its orders. Also, the Commission has given instructions to provide the information sought in RTI within 5 days. If information is not available, answer has been sought in the affidavit. Instructions have been given to the Urban Development and Housing Department to compensate the elderly applicant with Rs 5000. The complainant Jai Kumar Jain, a resident of Gwalior,

It has proved costly for Madhya Pradesh Housing Board for not giving the information sought in RTI to the elderly applicant of Gwalior

had sought information about the sale of shops in Maharajbada from the Housing Board Gwalior office in February 2021. The office replied that the information is not available, it will be available in Bhopal office. But Jain kept contacting Bhopal office for information but no information was given. There have been frequent cases in which government offices go against the rules and withhold information through RTI. If no one wants to give information then why not close the Information Commission. Rahul Singh, Commissioner, Madhya Pradesh State Information Commission.

PIMR Finance Club organizes 'BidWizz'

Indore: To enhance the decision-making and critical thinking abilities of students, FinX, the finance club of the Prestige Institute of Management and Research, organized a bidding competition called 'BidWizz'. The event began with an introductory session where the rules of the bidding competition were explained. During the competition, a virtual budget was provided to the participants, who competed with each other to secure the best deal or bid for specific assets for better investment opportunities. The winners of the BIDWHIZZ competition who demonstrated exceptional financial acumen were awarded prizes in different categories. Shreyansh Tiwari and Kaushal Jain were declared the winners, while Himanshu Verma, Sayam Jain, Manas Singhai, and Mohm. Faizan Khan were declared the first and second runner-up, respectively. Dr. Manisha Singhai, Dr. Priyanka Chawla, CMA Ravi, Dr. Samir Dubey, and CA Sakshi Verma informed that during the concluding ceremony, badges were distributed to all the core members of the Finance Club by PIMR Director Dr. S. Raman Iyer and Dr. Sukhjeet Matharu respectively.

Police seizes unused, abandoned vehicles from public places

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The traffic police has started the process of confiscating dilapidated abandoned vehicles parked in public places of the city from Saturday. On Saturday, lifting of vehicles with the help of cranes started from the Kohefiza area of the old city. These vehicles will be confiscated and dumped in the underground parking at TT Nagar Dussehra ground. In the state capital, traffic is hampered due to abandoned vehicles parked at public places. Besides, there they remains a possibility of accidents. To remove these vehicles, the traffic police have marked places across the city and started action from the Kohefiza area from Saturday. Municipal Corporation Act and Motor Vehicle Act action is being taken against these vehicles. On Saturday, a joint team of Traffic Police, Municipal Corporation and District Administration took action and lifted 21 four-wheelers parked illegally on Kohefiza main road under

the GAD over bridge and near the old RTO office with the help of a crane. During this period, challan was also issued to some vehicles on the spot under the Motor Vehicle Act. During the action, Municipal Corporation Encroachment Squad In-charge Zone-3 Mahesh Gaur, Ed. DCP Traffic Basant Kaul were present. DCP Traffic Padma Vilochan Shukla said that those vehicles whose registration period has expired should be auctioned by the Municipal Corporation. This campaign will continue continuously. The police had been continuously making announcements for the last 10 days to remove these vehicles. It is noteworthy that due to these dilapidated abandoned vehicles being parked on the road, there is a possibility of traffic jam and accident. People had also complained many times regarding this matter. But now the administration and police have shown strictness.



Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav pays tribute to party's founder leader Pt Deendayal Upadhyay on his death anniversary in Bhopal on Sunday. Pioneer photo

CM to address programme on International Day of Woman

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav will address the programme to be organised on the International Day of Women's Participation in Science on February 12 at 1 pm at Kushabhau Thakre International Convention Centre, Bhopal. During this time, skilled women in STEM (Science, Technology,

Engineering, Maths) fields will be honoured and offer letters will be distributed to women candidates selected in employment fairs. In the programme, Technical Education, Higher Education and AYUSH Minister Inder Singh Parmar and Minister of State for Skill Development and Employment (Independent Charge) Gautam Tetwal will be present. Under the programme, Procurement Essential for

Student Advancement (PESA) course will be launched in Mahila Polytechnic College, Bhopal in collaboration with all the government ITIs, Industrial Safety Training and IIT Indore under the Indo German Initiative for Technical Education (IGnITE). Also, course Blockchain will be launched in Ujjain, course IoT and AI in Jabalpur and course AR/VR in SV Polytechnic Bhopal by IIT Delhi.

Rahul's yatra resumes in C'garh

STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIGARH

The Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra led by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi resumed in Raigarh district of Chhattisgarh on Sunday after a two-day break.

He offered a garland to Mahatma Gandhi's statue at the Gandhi Chowk here before proceeding to the Kharsia Assembly constituency.

A huge crowd of Congress leaders and supporters gathered at the square and followed Gandhi, who was in an open jeep accompanied by state Congress in-charge Sachin Pilot, state party chief Deepak Baij and Leader of Opposition Charan Das Mahant.

The yatra entered Raigarh on Thursday from Odisha.

According to Congress leaders, the yatra will boost the morale of party workers after



the Congress' defeat in Assembly elections in November.

Hitting out at the BJP, Gandhi alleged that the ruling party's two-point programme

was to encourage injustice and spread hatred and violence.

He also targeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi, claiming he was not an OBC by birth as his caste 'ghanchi'

was included in the Other Backward Class list in 2000 in Gujarat by the BJP government there.

The yatra will cover 536 km in Chhattisgarh passing

“Hitting out at the BJP, Gandhi alleged that the ruling party's two-point programme was to encourage injustice and spread hatred and violence”

through Raigarh, Sakti, Korba, Surajpur, Surguja and Balrampur districts before entering Jharkhand on February 14.

Raja Devendra Pratap Singh is BJP RS candidate



STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

The Bharatiya Janata Party on Sunday named Raja Devendra Pratap Singh as the candidate for Rajya Sabha polls next month.

Singh (49) is among the 14 BJP candidates from Bihar, Haryana, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and West Bengal. The tenure of Rajya Sabha member Saroj Pandey from Chhattisgarh will end in April. Elections for 56 seats in the Rajya Sabha will be held on February 27.

Singh is a great grandson of Maharaja Chakradhar Singh of Raigarh. Presently, he is a District Panchayat member from Lailunga area.

CAF man injured in IED blast



STAFF REPORTER ■
BIJAPUR

A Chhattisgarh Armed Force (CAF) trooper was injured on Sunday when an improvised explosive device (IED) planted by Maoists exploded in Bijapur district.

Three IEDs, weighing 5 kg each, were also recovered from the site between Dumripalnar and Timenar villages, Bijapur

Superintendent of Police Jitendra Kumar Yadav said.

The explosion occurred around 9 am.

CAF's Punit Netam of 19/F battalion came in contact with the IED, triggering the blast.

Injured in a leg, he was rushed to the Nelasnar primary health centre and then shifted to the Dantewada district hospital. Eventually, he was flown to Raipur.

Knowledge has no end: CM



STAFF REPORTER ■
JASHPUR

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai said on Sunday that knowledge has no origin or end.

“Sanatan Dharma is a vast expanse of wisdom, which is deep and has a lot of potential.

“If we limit our discussion to Shrimad Bhagwat, then everything in life is really an attempt to touch its depths.”

Sai was addressing the second day of Shrimad Bhagwat Jnana Yagya week in Lodhma village in Jashpur district.

He added that Lodhma is a

part of the Ram Van Gaman area and will be expeditiously developed under the Ram Van Gaman circuit.

Sai also announced an assistance of Rs. 20 lakh for the establishment of a Bhagwat Bhawan and the upgrading of the Lodhma high school to a higher secondary school.

Firing over old enmity, four held



STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh Police on Sunday arrested four persons after they fired gunshots at each other here over an old enmity.

Rohit Singh Tomar, Sarang Madhyanh, Sumit Dhameja and Rohit Agrawal were taken into custody, Raipur. Additional Superintendent of Police (Urban) Lakhan Patle said.

The incident took place on February 10-11 night when Agrawal opened fire at Tomar and his accomplices after a fight at Hyper Club in the outskirts of Raipur.

Agrawal fired two rounds which did not hurt anyone. Then Tomar and the others attacked Agrawal's with a baseball bat and damaged his car.

Tomar is a history sheeteer while Agrawal was jailed in a rape case.

CM announces Feb 14 as mother-father worship day



STAFF REPORTER ■
JASHPUR

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai on Sunday announced the celebration of February 14 as mother-father worship day.

Speaking in Jashpur district, Sai said: “Even in the Vedas, the parents have been given the highest place.

“There is nothing greater than serving our parents; hence we should pay obeisance to them. Their

happiness is the key to a successful life.

“Today, I am Chief Minister with the blessings of my parents.”

Sai administered an oath to the children to serve their parents.



The Indian Overseas Bank organised health and blood donation camps as well as walkathons across Chhattisgarh to commemorate their 88th foundation day on Saturday.

Sai inaugurates CM Camp Office



STAFF REPORTER ■
JASHPUR

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai on Sunday inaugurated his Camp Office in Jashpur district to establish a

direct line of communication with people.

This office will enable people to convey their views directly to Sai and ensure close contact with him.

On this occasion, Sai said:

“Our goal is to establish a positive relationship with the people and connect them to the mainstream of development.

“This office will find meaningful solutions while

This office will enable people to convey their views directly to Sai and ensure close contact with him.

respecting the views of the people.”

mRNA vax shows promise against virus that causes birth defects

AGENCIES ■

An experimental mRNA vaccine by US-drug maker Moderna has shown promise against human cytomegalovirus (CMV) — a common virus that can infect babies during pregnancy.

While the virus rarely causes serious illness in healthy adults, it can cause birth defects and brain damage in newborns infected in utero and deadly infections in immune-compromised adults.

Though healthy adults are largely asymptomatic, one in every 200 newborns worldwide is infected with CMV during the mother's pregnancy.

“It is the most common congenital infection worldwide,” said Dr. Sallie Permar, the chair of the Department of Pediatrics and Nancy C. Paduano, Professor



in Pediatrics at Weill Cornell Medicine.

The study, published in The Journal of Infectious Diseases, provided evidence that the new mRNA vaccine candidate may protect adults against CMV.

Thus, it could potentially prevent women from passing the harmful infection to their babies during pregnancy.

The new mRNA vaccine-elicited responses that were better at preventing the CMV

virus from infecting epithelial cells that line the mouth and nose and provide the first line of defence against viral infection, compared with a previously moderately successful vaccine candidate called gB/MF59, from Sanofi and Novartis, revealed the study by the team at Weill Cornell Medicine of Cornell University.

The mRNA vaccine was also more effective at triggering the immune system

to destroy CMV-infected cells.

“We learned that the newer vaccine has the potential to be more effective than a previous CMV vaccine candidate because some of the functional immune responses it elicits are higher in magnitude,” Permar said.

The team used the data and patient samples from the gB/MF59 phase 2 trial in adolescent girls as a benchmark to assess the new mRNA-based vaccine.

Moderna used mRNA technology for the CMV vaccine and added a second target — a five-unit protein complex that allows the virus to infect the epithelial cells that line the nose and mouth — in addition to glycoprotein B used by Sanofi and Novartis.

In the study, Permar and her team compared the immune responses of

individuals vaccinated with gB/MF59 in the phase 2 trial with those immunised with Moderna's mRNA-based CMV vaccine in a phase 1 clinical trial that ended in 2020.

Specifically, the team compared the immune responses in people who were protected against CMV infection after receiving the older vaccine.

The Moderna vaccine has moved on to the first-ever phase 3 clinical study for a CMV vaccine candidate, which will help determine if these differences in immune responses will lead to stronger protection against CMV.

“After more than 50 years of research, we are closer than ever to having a licensed CMV vaccine,” Permar said.

“The new mRNA platform has a lot of potential.”

‘People who quit smoking before 40 likely to live same as non-smokers’

AGENCIES ■

Smokers who quit smoking before the age of 40 can expect to live almost as long as those who never smoked, a new report has said.

The study, published in the journal NEJM Evidence, showed that those who quit at any age return close to never-smoker survival 10 years after quitting, and about half that benefit occurs within just three years.

Quitting smoking is ridiculously effective in reducing the risk of death, and people can reap those rewards remarkably quickly, said Prabhat Jha, a professor at the University of Toronto's Dalla Lana School of Public Health.

The study included 1.5 million adults in four countries (the US, the UK, Canada and Norway), followed over 15 years. Smokers between the ages of 40 and 79 had an almost three-fold risk of dying



compared to those who never smoked, meaning on average they lost 12 to 13 years of life. The researchers found that former smokers reduced their risk of death to 1.3-fold (or 30 per cent higher) compared to never smokers.

“Stopping smoking at any age was associated with longer survival, and even those who quit for less than three years gained up to six years in life expectancy,” the study noted. Many people think it's too late to quit smoking, especially in middle age, according to Jha.

“But these results counter that line of thought.

It's never too late, the impact is fast and you can reduce risk across major diseases, meaning a longer and better quality of life,” he added. In addition, the researchers discovered that quitting smoking lowered the risk of dying from vascular disease and cancer, in particular. Former smokers also reduced their risk of death from respiratory disease, but slightly less so, likely due to residual lung damage.

Modi to distribute one lakh appointment letters

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will distribute more than one lakh appointment letters to newly inducted recruits in Central Government departments on Monday via video conferencing. On this occasion, the Prime Minister will also lay the foundation stone of Phase-I of the Integrated Complex “Karmayogi Bhavan”. This complex will promote collaboration and synergy among various pillars of Mission Karmayogi. Prime Minister Modi will distribute more than 1 lakh appointment letters to newly inducted recruits on February 12 at 10:30 am via video conferencing, a statement issued by the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) said. The Rozgar Mela will be held at 47 locations across the country and the recruitments are taking place across central government departments, and state and Union Territory governments are supporting this initiative. The new recruits will be joining the government in various



ministries and departments vis-a-vis Department of Revenue, Ministry of Home Affairs, Department of Higher Education, Department of Atomic Energy, Ministry of Defence, Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Ministry of Tribal Affairs and Ministry of Railways, the statement said. The Rozgar Mela is a step towards fulfilment of the commitment of the prime minister to accord highest priority to employment generation in the country, it said.

The mela is expected to leverage further employment generation and provide gainful opportunities to the youth for their empowerment and direct participation in National Development, the statement said. The newly inducted appointees are also getting an opportunity to train themselves through “Karmayogi Prarambh”, an online module on iGOT Karmayogi portal where more than 880 e-learning courses have been made available for ‘anywhere any device’ learning format, it said.

PM to witness India UPI services launch in Lanka, Mauritius

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India’s Unified Payment Interface (UPI) services will be rolled out in Sri Lanka and Mauritius at a virtual ceremony on Monday that will be witnessed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the top leadership of the two island nations. India’s RuPay card services would also be launched in Mauritius at the event. Mauritian Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth and Sri Lanka’s President Ranil Wickremesinghe will join Modi at the virtual ceremony, according to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). “Prime Minister Narendra Modi, President of Sri Lanka Ranil Wickremesinghe and Prime Minister of Mauritius Pravind Jugnauth will witness the launch of Unified Payment Interface (UPI) services in Sri Lanka and Mauritius, and also RuPay card services in Mauritius on February 12 at 1 PM via video conferencing,” it said. Developed by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), UPI is an instant real-time payment system to facilitate inter-bank transactions through mobile phones. RuPay



is a global card payment network from India, with wide acceptance at shops, ATMs, and online. The launch of the Indian services in Sri Lanka and Mauritius is taking place amid New Delhi’s increasing bilateral economic ties with the two countries. “India has emerged as a leader in Fintech innovation and Digital Public Infrastructure. The prime minister has placed a strong emphasis on sharing our development experiences and innovation with partner countries,” the MEA said in a statement. It said given India’s robust cultural and people-to-people linkages with Sri Lanka and

Mauritius, the launch will benefit a wide cross-section of people through a faster and seamless digital transaction experience and enhance digital connectivity between the countries.”The launch will enable availability of UPI settlement services for Indian nationals travelling to Sri Lanka and Mauritius as well as for Mauritian nationals travelling to India,” it said. “The extension of RuPay card services in Mauritius will enable Mauritian banks to issue cards based on RuPay mechanism in Mauritius and facilitate usage of RuPay card for settlements both in India and Mauritius,” it added.

Modi pays tribute to Pandit Deendayal



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday paid tributes to Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya, a key party ideologue, on his death anniversary, saying he showed the path to take the country forward by keeping the Indian culture and heritage at its centre. These have become an inspiration in building a developed India as well, Modi posted on X. Upadhyaya, an RSS functionary, was among the founding members of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, the BJP forerunner. His ideas of “antyodaya” (uplift

of the most impoverished) and “integral humanism” have often been cited by Modi as an inspiration for his governance model. Upadhyaya died in 1968. Other BJP leaders also paid rich tributes to him, with party president J P Nadda asserting that his values will always be a guiding light for the party. Home Minister Amit Shah said Upadhyaya’s life is a giant symbol of serving the nation and devotion towards it. He believed no country can progress by neglecting the fundamental values of its culture, Shah said.

Expelled Congress leader hints at rift in Gandhi family

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Expelled Congress leader Acharya Pramod Krishnam on Sunday dropped a bombshell indicating of a clear rift in the Congress’ first family — the Gandhis. Krishnam who is all set to join BJP said the High Command has a division and that the former party chief Rahul Gandhi has done everything to keep away his sibling Priyanka Gandhi and questioned why the latter has been in the party without any portfolio. He also mentioned the perpetual disrespect to the another stalwart Sachin Pilot who has been batting day in an out to sustain himself in the party led by a reluctant politician like Rahul Gandhi. Krishnam also sought to know why it’s now to be one month for the second leg of Bharat Jodo Nyaya Yatra that Priyanka



has not joined the yatra. “Like Lord Shiv, Sachin Pilot is gulping poison, Pramod Krishnam said adding that, Priyanka Gandhi -- for the first time in the party’s history -- was kept as the general secretary without any portfolio. Ask Priyanka Gandhi whether she is happy about it. Ask her why she is not joining Rahul Gandhi’s Bharat Jodo Nyaya Yatra. Who is orchestrating all

this because our president (Mallikarjun Kharge) is a rubber stamp,” Pramod Krishnam said. Krishnam was expelled from the Congress for six years for indiscipline and anti-party remarks. In the statement issued by Congress general secretary KC Venugopal, the party said, “In view of complaints about indiscipline and repeatedly making statement

against the party, Congress president has approved the Uttar Pradesh Congress Committee’s proposal to expel Pramod Krishnam for six years with immediate effect.” “When I was 16 or 17 years old, I gave my words to Rajiv Gandhi that I would stand with him. Today I am giving my words to PM Modi that I would stand with PM Modi because he is working for the development of the country. Everyone is asking what was my fault — whether me meeting Narendra Modi, Yogi Adityanath or me attending the pran pratishtha ceremony of Ram Temple,” Pramod Krishnam said. On being asked whether he would join the BJP, he said he did not know what he would do. “I have faith in God. I will go wherever God takes me. I am with Modi ji because he is with the country,” Pramod Krishnam said.

BJP national spokesperson Shehzad Poonawala said Pramod Krishnam earned Rahul Gandhi’s wrath because of his ‘strident defence of Priyanka Vadra’. “Congress cannot even tolerate aides of Priyanka now!” Poonawala said adding that when he was in the Congress he alerted Acharya Pramod that ‘Priyanka was no better than Rahul’ but Acharya chose to remain loyal to Priyanka. Among his anti-party activities, Acharya Pramod criticised the Congress’s stand of not attending the pran pratishtha ceremony of Ram Temple in Ayodhya on January 22 and despite the top leadership declining the invitation, he attended. On the expulsion, he said he was happy that the party freed him. “I wish to Congress party to expel me for 14 years instead of 6 years. Lord Rama was also expelled for 14 years,” he said.

In a first, CAPF constable exam being conducted in 13 regional languages

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

For the first time, the constable recruitment examination in the Central Armed Police Forces such as the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Border Security Force (BSF) and Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) will be conducted in 13 regional languages apart from Hindi and English. The examination are being conducted from February 10-March 7 and around 48 lakh candidates are appearing in 128 cities across the country, according to an official statement. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the guidance of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) had decided to conduct



the constable (general duty) examination for recruitment in CAPFs in 13 regional languages in addition to Hindi and English from January 1, 2024. This “historic decision” has been taken on the initiative of the home minister to increase the participation of local youths in the Central Armed Police Forces and to promote regional languages, it said. In addition to Hindi and

English, the question papers will now be prepared in the following 13 regional languages: Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Malayalam, Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, Odia, Urdu, Punjabi, Manipuri and Konkani. Constable examination is one of the flagship recruitment tests conducted by the Staff Selection Commission (SSC) attracting lakhs of youths from across the country.

Kharge extends party support to protesting farmers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Sunday extended his party’s support to the farmers who have set on march to Delhi seeking fulfillment of the promises Modi government made to them when they withdrew their year long protest outside the Delhi borders. He congratulated the Punjab farmers for launching the stir for the fulfillment of their demands. Addressing an impressive workers convention organized by the Punjab Congress, Kharge pointed out, Modi had promised so many things to the farmers including guarantee on Minimum Support Price. “What happened to those promises?” he asked. The Congress president accused Prime Minister Modi of calling farmers names and describing them as terrorists and ‘andolan jeeves’ in a most derogatory manner. Congratulating the people of Punjab, he said, the state was unique as it was only here that both the Jawsans and Kisans are found. He said, in some places there are kisans but no jawsans and in some places there are jawsans but no kisans. But, he remarked, it is only in Punjab we find both Jawsans and Kisans thus a great and unique instance of former Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri’s slogan, “Jai Jawan Jai Kisan”. But, Kharge regretted, Modi had tried to damage and destroy the both institutions of farming as well as the defence services. He said, while Modi first brought three black laws, then he introduced the Agnipath scheme in the defence services. Substantiating his charge that Modi was anti-farmer, Kharge



disclosed that Rs one lakh crores allocated for the agriculture sector had lapsed as the Modi government did not spend it on agriculture. He disclosed that Rs 40,000 crores was pocketed by the private insurance companies under the ‘Fasal Beema Yojana’. Besides, for the first time in independent India’s history, farmers were paying tax of Rs 25,000 per hectare. Similarly, Kharge added, the Modi government was not filling about 30 lakh vacancies in various government departments and public sector undertakings. He alleged that Modi does not want the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and the Backward Classes to get 50 percent jobs. He said, Modi wants the poor to remain poor. He said, the big and huge industries set up under the Public Sector by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru were being handed over to one single friend of the Prime Minister. Responding to Modi’s question as to what Congress did, Kharge said, “we built dams, brought white and green revolution and set up institutions like the Punjab Agriculture University”. He challenged the BJP and Modi to name a single such thing they had done for the country. Taking a jibe at the Prime Minister, he remarked, sometimes Modi flirts off a single train twice, first from South and second time from the north.

Navy conferences on warship maintenance organised in Mumbai



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

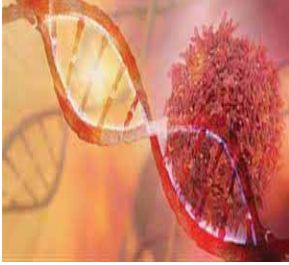
With the objective of maintain its fleet of submarines and warships in top operational condition, Indian Navy’s Annual Refit Conference 24 (ARC 24) and Annual Infrastructure Conference 24 (AIC 24) were conducted on February 8–9 at Naval Dockyard, Mumbai, under the Chairmanship of VAdm Kiran Deshmukh, Chief of Materiel, navy officials said here on Sunday. Refit Plans of Indian Naval Ships and Submarines, augmentation of infrastructure to meet the maintenance requirements of the new ships and submarines being inducted, Materiel Cooperation with Friendly Foreign Countries and digital solutions being implemented in enhancing maintenance were discussed. Foreseeable challenges in Maintenance of Indian Navy’s platforms and their solutions, including changes at the strategic level required to make refit and repair processes efficient were also deliberated, they said. The Chief of Materiel complemented all Naval Dockyards and Repair Yards for the efforts in successfully ensuring enhanced operational availability of naval assets. He also highlighted the importance of all Logistics and Maintenance Organisations to be more agile by harnessing new technology and efficient work processes, as

also the requirement for modernisation of marine assets and yard infrastructure. During the AIC, progress of various technical and marine infrastructure projects was reviewed by the Chief of Materiel. He emphasised the need to develop ‘Future Ready’ repair and support infrastructure while modernising and revitalising the existing infrastructure. He expressed happiness with the progress made in the ongoing infrastructure projects and appreciated the completion of various projects in the previous year including the Wet Basin and Refit Jetty at Port Blair. Vice Admiral Sanjay J Singh, Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief Western Naval Command, addressing the forum complemented the efforts put in by all concerned in ensuring enhanced operational availability of platforms and emphasised the need to maintain the focus towards supporting heightened operational readiness, upskilling of workforce to develop expertise in new inductions and attention to information security. The conference was attended by delegates from Naval Headquarters, the three Naval Commands, the Tri-Services Andaman and Nicobar Command, Director General Naval Projects, Naval Dockyards, Repair Yards and Material Organisations of the Indian Navy.

Need for expanding oncology services in tier two cities: Experts

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The increasing incidence of cancer in India, coupled with alarming statistics such as 50 per cent of lung cancer cases occurring in non-smokers and breast cancer affecting every eighth woman, underscores the urgent need to expand oncology services in tier two cities to close the care gap in cancer treatment across the States. On the inaugural day of the two-day IO-CON2024 conference which was held here, top oncologists also highlighted the impact of factors like declining air quality and lifestyle habits on cancer prevalence, emphasizing the importance of enhancing awareness and early diagnosis. Dr. Madhur Garg, the Clinical Director of Radiation Oncology at Montefiore Medical Center in the United States, emphasized the importance of expanding oncology services in tier two cities in India and advocated for a strong public-private partnership to achieve the goal. Dr. Garg also pointed out that doctors are willing to serve in tier two cities, provided there is adequate infrastructure in place to support cancer treatment services. He also acknowledged the positive impact of the central flagship Ayushman Bharat health coverage. “Of the almost 14 lakh new cancer cases diagnosed in India every year, more than 60% get diagnosed in advanced stages which underscores the need for an enhancing the awareness and diagnosis,” said Dr. Shubham Garg, Director of Surgical Oncology, IOCI, Fortis Hospital, Noida while Dr Anita Malik, Senior Consultant and Clinical Lead Radiation Oncology at IOCI stressed the



importance of scaling up radiation therapy equipment to meet the increasing demand, calling for greater cooperation between the public and private sectors. Dr PK Sharma, Executive Director, International Oncology Cancer Institute stressed on the need for a holistic treatment, personalized medicine in oncology leverages molecular testing and comprehensive genomic profiling to develop individualized treatment strategies that consider the unique genetic, molecular, and environmental factors influencing each patient’s cancer. In India, there are more than 640 radiation therapy equipment, but because the country is now experiencing a 5-7% annual growth in cancer cases, the number of machines needs to be scaled up to 1400 as per WHO, said the experts. “The infrastructure costs associated with any oncology institution exceed Rs 100 crore, and the cost of radiation devices is at least Rs 25 crore. This calls for sufficient public-private cooperation to make the treatment accessible to the greatest number of people, which is still limited to a set of people,” said Dr Malik. Looking ahead, Dr Rajat Bajaj, Program Director, IOCI emphasized the importance of timely detection and a people-friendly approach in oncology centers and stressed the need for government-private sector cooperation to save more lives.

Ambitious football for schools plan launched across country

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Department of School Education & Literacy, Ministry of Education, in collaboration with All India Football Federation (AIFF) and Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) has launched the ambitious Football for Schools (F4S) programme of FIFA for school students across the country. According to a Press release by the Ministry of Education, the programme aims to significantly broaden the accessibility of football for students, regardless of gender, within the school setting, while seamlessly integrating football-related activities into the education system in collaboration with various stakeholders. Under the programme, on 9th February 2024, 6848 footballs were distributed to 1260 Schools of 17 Districts of Odisha. The footballs were distributed from Nodal district NVS with the presence of local dignitaries from various fields. The kick-off of the distribution of balls was launched by Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on December 2, 2023 from JNV Cuttack, Odisha. Further, the footballs were distributed in the districts of Angul, Dhenkanal and Deogarh in Odisha; and Goa, Maharashtra, Gujarat and UT of Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu in a phased manner. An MoU was earlier signed between the Ministry of Education, AIFF and FIFA on 30 October, 30, 2022. Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya is the Nodal organization for the F4S programme. Under this programme, more than 11 lakh FIFA footballs are

to be distributed throughout the country in a phased manner. More than 1.50 lakh schools will benefit from this programme. As a part of the programme, to enhance capacity building, recently the department has conducted a master training programme at 3 venues, viz., Sambalpur, Pune and Bengaluru where around 300 physical education teachers/trainees from States/UTs, KVS, NVS and AIFF across India participated with an aim to learn from the best and further use their training and skills as Master Trainers at State level for further capacity building in the field. F4S aims to contribute to the education, development, and empowerment of around 700 million children across the world. It seeks to make football more accessible to both boys and girls by incorporating football activities into the education system, in partnership with relevant authorities and stakeholders. Through the F4S programme, the aim has also been to significantly broaden the accessibility of football for students, regardless of gender, within the school setting, while seamlessly integrating football-related activities into the education system in collaboration with various stakeholders. By fostering partnerships at different levels, the programme wishes to instil a sense of enthusiasm for the sport, laying the foundation for a lasting sports culture that goes beyond individual schools. It will not only introduce the joy of playing football to students but also infuse values of teamwork, discipline, and fitness, contributing to their holistic development.

Modi has worked to secure respect for India cultural heritage, says Shah

PTI ■ MYSURU

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday credited Prime Minister Narendra Modi with securing respect for India's cultural heritage on the world stage, citing the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya and the promotion of other key pilgrimage centres as examples. Speaking at 'Suttur Jathra' (fair) event near here, he lauded Modi for promoting the preservation of Yoga, Ayurveda, and Indian

languages, along with making the country secure and prosperous. "Narendra Modi has worked to gain respect for the country's cultural heritage on the world stage. Modiji has worked for the revival of several of our cultural centres such as Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, Kashi Vishwanath Corridor in Kashi, Mahakal Corridor (Mahakal Lok Corridor in Ujjain), and resurrection of Kedarnath and Badrinath Dham," Shah said. Suttur Math on the banks of river Kapila, located



in Nanjangud taluk in this district, is one of the prominent spiritual centres in the state that propagates

Veerashaiva/Lingayat faith. Jagadguru Sri Shivarathri Deshikendra Mahaswamiji of Suttur Math, Union Minister

Pralhad Joshi, former chief minister Basavaraj Bommai, Leader of Opposition in the Karnataka Legislative Assembly R Ashoka, and state BJP President B Y Vijayendra, were among those present at the event. Shah lauded Sri Shivarathri Deshikendra Mahaswamij for deciding to open a branch of the Suttur Math in Ayodhya, and start working there. Offering tributes to 12th century social reformer and philosopher Basaveshwara, he also acknowledged the contributions on Suttur

Math and its seers in promoting the welfare of society. "I want to tell Mahaswamiji that I myself and every worker of the BJP will always respect the contributions of Suttur Math to the society and, in the coming days, will in every way support the efforts to take it forward amidst the people," he added. Mysuru-based sculptor Arun Yogiraj, who chiselled the idol of 'Ram Lalla', consecrated in the newly-constructed temple in Ayodhya, was felicitated at the event.

3 dead, 16 injured as speeding milk tanker ploughs into crowd

PTI ■ GANGTOK

Three persons were killed and 16 injured when a speeding milk tanker ploughed into a crowd at Ranipool in Gangtok district, police said on Sunday. A crowd had gathered at the mela ground Ranipool, about 11 km from here, to play tombola when the speeding milk tanker ploughed into them around 7.30 pm on Saturday, the police said. The driver of the tanker has been arrested, they said. All the injured persons were rushed to Central Referral Hospital where doctors declared two persons were

brought dead and one succumbed to injuries at the hospital, they said. Doctors at the hospital said the condition of the five of the injured was "serious". Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Sing Tamang said he was deeply saddened by the tragic accident that occurred in Ranipool. He announced a compensation of Rs 5 lakh to the next of kin of those who died in the tragic accident. "We are committed to providing every possible support during this difficult time. My thoughts are with the injured and their families, and I sincerely pray for their swift recovery," the CM said.

Assam Cabinet okays Bill to ban magical healing

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

The Assam government gave its nod to a bill to prohibit and eliminate practices of "magical healing" in the name of treatment, proposing strong punitive action against the "healers". The decision was taken at a cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday. Sharing the decisions taken at the meeting on X, Sarma said the cabinet also selected 10 cities/towns for a dedicated sustainable development programme and proposed to bring in reforms in the state municipal cadres. The council of ministers approved the 'Assam Healing (Prevention of Evil) Practices Bill, 2024'. The proposed bill seeks to "prohibit and eliminate practices of magical healing in the name of treatment of some congenital diseases such as deafness,

dumbness, blindness, physical deformity and autism". "It will prohibit such healing sessions completely and provide strong punitive action against 'healers' extorting the poor and downtrodden people in the name of treatment," the CM wrote on X. For sustainable urban development, concept of ten cities development (Doh Shaheer-Ek Rupayan) will be introduced. The implementation of the concept will be monitored and reviewed by a state-level steering committee. Key components under it include solid waste management, clean and potable water supply, traffic management, urban planning and manpower rationalisation and capacity building. The cabinet approved an amendment of the Assam Municipal Act 1956, through which roles of three state municipal cadres will be defined.

Maharashtra Cabinet Ministers to visit Ayodhya soon: Fadnavis

PTI ■ MUMBAI/PUNE

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Sunday said state cabinet ministers will soon visit Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh, where the idol consecration of the Ram Temple took place on January 22. Fadnavis, however, did not share further details. Queried on similar temple disputes in Kashi and Mathura, Fadnavis told reporters an amicable solution within the legal framework would be found the way Prime Minister Narendra Modi ensured the Ram Temple was constructed in Ayodhya (following a Supreme Court verdict). Asserting that Mathura, Kashi and Ayodhya are all sacred places, Fadnavis said after the construction of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, it is natural for people to expect solution to the dispute in Mathura (Krishna



Janmabhoomi) as well. "I believe just as the Ram Temple got constructed due to the efforts of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Shri Krishna Janmabhoomi will also be resolved with harmony and within the framework of the law," the senior BJP leader said. "A new corridor has been built in Kashi Vishwanath. Permission for worship has also been granted there and a conducive environment is being witnessed. In simple

words, all these things are happening with harmony and as per law," said Fadnavis. He was in Pimpri Chinchwad in Pune to attend the Geeta Bhakti Amrit Mahotsav in Alandi in Pune along with Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. Hindu litigants say the Shahi Idgah in Mathura was built on the site believed to be the birthplace of Lord Krishna. A Krishna temple stands next to the mosque. Also, a court-ordered Archaeological Survey of India report recently suggested that the Gyanvapi mosque Varanasi (Kashi) was built after demolition of a temple there during Aurangzeb's rule. A district court in Varanasi last month ruled that a priest can perform prayers before the idols in a cellar of the Gyanvapi Masjid, a significant development in the legal battle over the mosque adjacent to the Kashi Vishwanath temple.



Ink hurled on banner declaring Ajit Pawar wife as future MP

PTI ■ PUNE

Unidentified persons threw ink on a banner with the photograph of Sunetra Pawar, wife of Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister and NCP leader Ajit Pawar, declaring her as the next Lok Sabha member in Pune district. A video of the incident, which occurred in Karhati village in Baramati taluka, the home turf of the Pawars, has gone viral on social media. Police rushed to the spot and the banner was removed, an official said on Sunday. Notably, the banner declared Sunetra Pawar as an "upcoming MP" and appealed to people to elect her with a huge margin.

Speculation is rife in political circles about the candidature of Ajit Pawar's wife from the Baramati Lok Sabha constituency against the backdrop of a split in the NCP. In a setback to Sharad Pawar, the Election Commission recently recognised the Ajit Pawar-led faction as the real NCP and allotted it the clock symbol. Ajit Pawar's cousin sister Supriya Sule, daughter of Sharad Pawar, is the sitting MP from Baramati. Such posters about Sunetra Pawar's candidature had come up in Baramati in the past also. Baramati assembly constituency is represented by Ajit Pawar.

Three Bangladeshi women arrested in Tripura

PTI ■ AGARTALA

Three Bangladeshi women and three locals were arrested from Agartala railway station here on Sunday for attempting to board a Kolkata-bound train without valid papers, police said. Upon questioning, the Bangladeshi women failed to produce their passports, said Obaidur Rahman, the officiating in-charge of Agartala GRP police station. Rahman said the Bangladeshi women were arrested under the India Passport Act, while the remaining three individuals, comprising two men and one woman from Tripura's Sepahijala district, were arrested on charges of human trafficking. "Preliminary interrogation revealed that the three Bangladeshi nationals from Dhaka had intentions of traveling to Kolkata. An investigation has started to ascertain the motive of the three women," police added.

Friends turned foes slug it out in charged up poll battle in TN

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Friends turned foes - the BJP and AIADMK - are locked in a rancorous war at times becoming personal targeting BJP state chief K Annamalai, in a charged-up political atmosphere in Tamil Nadu ahead of the Lok Sabha election. Anticipating the early announcement of the poll, the ruling DMK has initiated talks with its allies on seat-sharing and is gearing up to bring out its poll manifesto. Though a multi-cornered contest appears imminent, as of now, the political parties barring the DMK and allies are still hazy on alliance. While former Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami sees red at the mention of DMK president and Chief Minister M K Stalin, the loose cannons in his AIADMK devote more

time on personally targeting Annamalai and sustain themselves in the limelight. "Much of their ire is due to the BJP's preference for former Chief Minister O Panneerselvam as a reliable ally than to AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami," a senior BJP leader said. BJP has never been comfortable in the company of ambitious Palaniswami, who in a bid to garner the minorities votes has expressed opposition to the Uniform Civil Code. The AIADMK General Secretary, who severed pol ties with the BJP in September last year, due to Annamalai's aggressive politics, is engaged in forming an alliance under his leadership. Another cause for heartburn for the AIADMK was the shifting of loyalties by 12 of its former legislators and



a MP, recently, to the BJP. A former MLA each from the DMK, Congress and DMDK, too joined the BJP. Ridiculing it, former AIADMK Minister D Jayakumar remarked "the Tamil Nadu Governor will invite Annamalai to form the government with those former MLAs."

Further, he likened the BJP state president to a "mud horse" and said Annamalai was creating an illusion that people were joining the BJP. "Those who follow him are likely to disappear when the mud horse disintegrates in water," Jayakumar claimed. Both the Dravidian majors too have been welcoming a steady trickle of workers from other parties, as it is election time. Though the Congress,

Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi and the Left parties too have a presence in certain pockets in the state, they toe the DMK's line. While the ruling DMK is comfortably placed as its alliance is intact, AIADMK and BJP are vying to form an alliance with smaller parties. Other political parties such as the Desiya Murpokku Dravida Kazhagam (DMDK) and the Pattali Makkal Katchi are yet to decide on an alliance and the options before them are only a few - either the BJP or AIADMK. Parties such as actor Kamal Haasan's Makkal Needhi Maiam and actor Seeman-led Naam Tamilar Katchi would also be in the fray. "Annamalai's politics of publicity won't work in Tamil Nadu," claimed former AIADMK state Minister Kadambur Raju while

Jayakumar, training his guns on Panneerselvam, claimed the latter would join the BJP after the Lok Sabha election. Former AIADMK Minister R B Udayakumar, who appeared to go overboard in his criticism, called Annamalai a "Leghiyam (a traditional thick herbal medicine that boosts immunity) seller and said the BJP president was a political novice. "Yes, I am Leghiyam trader. I sell the best Leghiyam to banish corruption, rowdysim and anarchy in Tamil Nadu. Those who consume my Leghiyam can see results of a good administration, and good leadership" Annamalai, dismissing Udayakumar as an "invalid currency" retorted while leading his six-month-old En Mann, En Makkal (My Land, My People) yatra, recently.

Education transformational mechanism to ensure equality: Vice President



PTI ■ GONDIA

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Sunday said education is the most impactful transformational mechanism to bring about equality and cut down inequality. Addressing a function in Gondia district of Maharashtra, he said young parliamentarians with vision, mission, and talent have a big role to play in building Viksit Bharat of 2047. Dhankhar also suggested that "value addition" to farm produce will bring qualitative improvements in the lives of farmers. "Today, the world is seeing the change in India and the change is imminent when the leader is aware of the ground reality and has the ability to change them. Today, we have the able leadership at the Centre and in the state who are well capable of bringing the change," Dhankhar said. He said India is fast emerging as a strong nation. "In 1989 when I became MP for the first time, it was a difficult time for our country. The country had to send its gold reserve by air to Switzerland where it was kept as a mortgage in two banks so that our country's financial credibility could be sustained," the vice president said. But the time has changed now and we have overtaken Canada, France, and England to become the 5th largest economy in the world, he added. "India is currently the fifth largest economy in the world. In the next two to three years,

we will move ahead of Germany and Japan," he added. The function was organized to mark the 118th birth anniversary of Manohar Patel, father of ex-Union minister Praful Pate, who belongs to NCP. "Education is the most impactful transformational mechanism to bring about equality and cut down inequality. Young parliamentarians with vision, mission and talent have a big role to play in building Viksit Bharat of 2047," the vice president added. Dhankhar said Gondia is a major centre of rice trade and that he would like to suggest to Chief Minister Eknath Shinde to work on value addition to rice for its marketing. "I want to tell CM Shinde to do value addition to rice as its main marketing point. For the growth of farmers, value addition to their produce is important. Such changes would bring qualitative improvements in the life of cultivators," he said. He said Swachh Bharat, gas connections, and tap water connections to every household have become a reality. Dhankhar also hailed women's reservation and their empowerment. CM Shinde said Maharashtra is ahead of other states in all the fields and the "double engine" government is making progress. "Maharashtra will also achieve the goal of becoming a USD 1 trillion economy and contribute to the nation's progress," Shinde said.



Four booked for cheating Navi Mumbai man of ₹17 lakh in share trading fraud

PTI ■ THANE

The cyber police have registered a case against four persons for allegedly cheating a 45-year-old man from Navi Mumbai township in Maharashtra of more than Rs 17 lakh after luring him to invest in share trading, an official said on Sunday. The victim, resident of Nerul area, was promised high returns in the trading. The accused allegedly made the victim invest Rs 17.30 lakh in a fraudulent share

trading scheme from December 5, 2023 to January 28, 2024, the official from cyber police station said. When the victim did not get the returns as promised and the invested amount, he filed a police complaint. The police on Saturday registered a case against four persons under Indian Penal Code Sections 419 (cheating by personation), 420 (cheating) and 34 (common intention) the official said, adding a probe was on into the case.

Bihar Police to send echallans to traffic violators via registered post

PTI ■ PATNA

Bihar Police have decided to send e-challans to traffic violators via registered post, said a senior officer. The system of sending e-challans to traffic violators via registered post has been recently introduced in Patna, said Additional Director General (ADG) Traffic, Sudhanshu Kumar. "Sending e-challans to motorists for violating traffic norms through SMSes is not working properly. That is mainly because of frequent change in mobile phone numbers of offenders. This is the only reason that we have decided to deliver e-challans to traffic violators via registered post", the ADG Traffic told PTI. "We introduced this system in Patna a few days ago. Now we want to introduce it in all districts. A letter in this regard has already been sent to all district traffic police", he said.



The ADG Traffic said the cost of sending e-challans via registered post could be recovered from the offenders. "At present, the traffic police is bearing the cost...but we have sought permission from the competent authority for the recovery of the cost of sending challans by registered post from the offenders", said Kumar. According to figures, on an

average 3,000 e-challans/notices are issued daily for traffic violations in Bihar, mostly for over-speeding, signal jumping, not wearing helmets, triple-riding on two-wheelers, talking on the phone while driving, etc. Analysis of figures (with the traffic police) reveals that not even half of the total traffic e-challans issued in the state per day are paid by

motorists. The latest figures (of Bihar Traffic Police) of February 8, 2024, reveal that a total of 2,989 e-challans (of Rs 46.5 lakh) were issued in all 38 districts in the state for different traffic violations. Out of total Rs 46.5 lakh fine, motorists cleared challans of Rs 6.44 lakh only. "Around Rs. 39.63 lakh amount (fine) of February 8 is pending. Therefore, one can imagine the pendency of payments/fines. This is the reason that we have decided to send penalty notices/e-challans to traffic violators via registered post", said the ADG Traffic. The state capital tops the list of cities where maximum traffic violations take place. According to official figures, Traffic Police issue around 630 to 650 e-challans for different violations in Patna almost every day. Other cities where maximum traffic violations take place include Bhagalpur, Muzaffarpur, Rohtas, Gaya, Begusarai and Saran.

FIRST COLUMN

A JOURNEY THROUGH LOSS AND HEALING

The Buddhist approach offers a grounded and rational way to cope with grief



The doctor was an early riser. Upon waking he hit the gym. He remained fit and in proper shape by maintaining this regimen. The medico was a noted pediatrician, his wife an eminent cardiologist. Unfortunately, their only daughter suffered from a compromised heart condition. The trio had attended a party the previous evening. It was time to drop the daughter to school and the father knocked at the door. But the cherubic girl did not respond. Life was snuffed out; tragedy had struck the family and a pall of gloom descended.

A few weeks back an old aunt had kicked the bucket. It was a double whammy for the family, and they were inconsolable. Several centuries ago, in the time of the Buddha, a woman lost her only child to the cruel hands of fate. In an anguished state she implored the Enlightened One to resuscitate the dead child. Buddha, the compassionate, agreed to perform the miracle. He asked the lady to collect mustard seeds from all the houses of the village which had never seen death or grief. The woman knocked at the doors of all the houses in the village but returned empty handed. Handling grief is a challenging task and only skillful minds can undertake this responsibility.

The doctor couple who could not save their precious child were subsumed into a cesspool of anger, guilt, sadness, pangs of loneliness, numbness, and a yearning for their beloved one. To overcome their grief and desolation, the husband, a moderate drinker, became a quotidian one and his spouse began administering herself sedatives.

Several eminent psychologists like Parker, Arewill and Worden have zeroed in on the point that those suffering from grief, need to move on from the feeling of numbness, pining, depression, a feeling of shock and despair



to the process of recovery. It is important for the grieving to accept the reality of the loss, experience the pain of the departed one, adjust to the environment of living without the deceased person.

Medical science has made rapid advancements such that proper diagnosis, therapy, and counselling along with proper medication can trigger the change agent in the wrecked mind. Alternatively, there are techniques like hypnosis and even providing ECT (in the worst-case scenario) to address the problem.

The Theravada Buddhist traditions have dealt with the subject of handling grief in a dynamic manner. The human mind by the process of strong internal resolution can overcome this vicissitude in life by mindfulness. The process is called Satipatthana.

The emotionally wrought can find solace and succour by becoming aware of the reality about the impermanence of events, happenings, and people. The mind should become strong to accept the reality and look ahead. There are breathing techniques like Vipassana and Sudarshan Kriya which have proven ability to transfigure the mind from a depressed state to a positive one. Both the techniques have been validated by medical science as alternative therapies and have the power to alter the thought process, bringing it to the present moment.

Several grieving souls adopt holistic measures like the breathing techniques mentioned, meditation, pranayama, yoga, chanting of mantras, being in communion with nature or seva to overcome their grief and restore normalcy in their lives. It is the recalcitrant human mind which acts as a deterrent and needs to be tamed. "Grief is in two parts. The first is loss. The second is remaking of life," writes Anne Roiphe.

(The writer is a CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd and is a faculty of the Art of Living; views are personal)

The impact and evolution of IBC 2016

The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code IBC of 2016 streamlines insolvency resolution processes and bolstering investor confidence



MANOJ KUMAR ANAND



The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) of 2016 stands as a transformative milestone in recent Indian legislative history. Enacted with the aim of streamlining and expediting the resolution process for distressed businesses, the IBC has had far-reaching implications for India's economic landscape and global standing. In this comprehensive exploration, we delve into the genesis of the IBC, its impact on India's Ease of Doing Business Index, the role of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI), and the recent amendments that have further refined and strengthened the framework.

The IBC of 2016 was a response to the urgent need for a comprehensive insolvency regime in India. Prior to its enactment, the country grappled with a fragmented and inefficient system that often led to protracted legal battles and value destruction for all stakeholders involved. Recognizing the critical importance of a robust insolvency framework in fostering economic growth and investor confidence, the Indian government embarked on a journey to overhaul the existing system.

The passage of the IBC in 2016 marked a paradigm shift in India's approach to insolvency resolution. By introducing a unified legal framework that streamlined the resolution process and prioritized creditor rights, the IBC sought to expedite the resolution of distressed assets and maximize value for all stakeholders. Key provisions of the IBC include the establishment of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) and the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI), as well as the creation of Insolvency Professionals (IPs) and Insolvency Professional Entities (IPEs) to facilitate the resolution process.

One of the most significant outcomes of the IBC has been its impact on India's Ease of Doing Business Index. Since the



THE SUCCESS OF THE IBC CAN ALSO BE ATTRIBUTED TO THE EFFORTS OF THE INSOLVENCY AND BANKRUPTCY BOARD OF INDIA (IBBI), THE REGULATORY AUTHORITY TASKED WITH OVERSEEING ITS IMPLEMENTATION

enactment of the IBC, India's ranking in the World Bank Ease of Doing Business Index has steadily improved, climbing by another 14 places to 63 in 2019. This improvement can be attributed in large part to the IBC's success in resolving insolvency cases more efficiently and effectively, thereby enhancing the overall business environment in the country.

In particular, India's ranking in resolving insolvency saw a remarkable jump of 56 places to 52 in 2019, marking the highest-ever leap recorded by any country in the history of the World Bank. This significant improvement reflects the positive impact of the IBC in expediting the resolution process, reducing the time and cost involved in resolving insolvency cases, and maximising the value recovered by creditors.

The success of the IBC can also be attributed to the efforts of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI), the regulatory authority tasked with overseeing the implementation of the IBC. Since its inception, the IBBI has played a crucial role in shaping and refining the insolvency framework, issuing regulations, guidelines, and circulars to ensure smooth and effective implementation of the IBC.

In its journey of seven years, the IBBI has introduced six amendments to the IBC, each aimed at further enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the insolvency resolution process. These amendments have addressed various challenges and loopholes in the framework, making it more robust and resilient to emerging

complexities in the insolvency landscape.

One of the key areas of focus for the IBBI has been the regulation of Insolvency Professionals (IPs) and Insolvency Professional Entities (IPEs), who play a critical role in the insolvency resolution process. The IBBI has introduced several amendments to the regulations governing IPs and IPEs, aimed at enhancing their role and capabilities in resolving insolvency cases.

For example, the IBBI has introduced amendments to allow IPs to resign from their roles under certain circumstances, thereby addressing concerns about the prolonged tenure of IPs without remuneration. Additionally, amendments have been made to allow IPEs to engage their partners or directors in insolvency assignments, expanding their capacity and expertise in the resolution process.

Furthermore, the IBBI has introduced amendments to streamline the appointment process for IPs by introducing a panel of eligible candidates for appointment by the adjudicating authority. This has helped to expedite the appointment process and ensure a more transparent and efficient resolution process.

In addition to amendments related to IPs and IPEs, the IBBI has also introduced amendments to other regulations governing the insolvency process. For example, amendments have been made to clarify the role of monitoring committees in the resolution process and to streamline the billing process for insolvency professionals. Overall, the amendments introduced by the

IBBI have helped to address various challenges and complexities in the insolvency resolution process, making it more efficient, transparent, and effective. These amendments have further strengthened the IBC and solidified India's position as a leader in insolvency reform.

Looking ahead, the IBBI remains committed to continuously improving and refining the insolvency framework to ensure that it remains responsive to the evolving needs and challenges of the insolvency landscape. By fostering an environment that is conducive to efficient and effective insolvency resolution, the IBBI aims to support India's economic growth and development goals and enhance investor confidence in the country's business environment.

In conclusion, the IBC of 2016 stands as a testament to India's commitment to fostering a business-friendly environment and enhancing the ease of doing business in the country. Through its robust framework and proactive regulatory efforts, the IBC has contributed significantly to improving India's ranking in the Ease of Doing Business Index and enhancing investor confidence in the country's business environment. With the continued support and efforts of regulatory authorities like the IBBI, India is well-positioned to further strengthen its insolvency framework and drive economic growth and development in the years to come.

(The writer is a chartered accountant and a visiting faculty to ICAI, ICSI; Views are personal)

Celebrating women in science: Recognising their achievements

Despite their significant contributions, women in science still face systemic barriers, including gender bias, unequal representation and limited access to opportunities

Yesterday, we celebrated the International Day of Women in Science, a day dedicated to recognising and honouring the achievements of women in the field of science. This annual event serves as a reminder of the invaluable contributions women have made to scientific progress and innovation throughout history. It is an opportunity to highlight their accomplishments, shed light on the challenges they face, and inspire future generations of women to pursue careers in science.

Recently, while presenting the interim Budget 2024, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman highlighted that female enrollment in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) courses



has reached 43 per cent, which is one of the world's highest figures. She said, "Female enrollment in higher education has gone up by 28 percent in ten years. In STEM courses, girls and women constitute 43 percent of enrollment—one of the highest in the world. All these measures reflect the increasing participation of women in the workforce." She also mentioned the empowerment of women through entre-

preneurship, ease of living, and dignity, mentioning, "Thirty crore Mudra Yojana loans have been given to women entrepreneurs."

From historic figures like Savitribai Jyotiba Phule, who was the first female teacher of India and founded the first girls' school, to Lady Abala Bose, who was the first Indian woman to study medicine at Madras University, to Kamala Sohonie, the first Indian woman to receive a PhD in a scientific discipline, to Ayyalasomayajula Lalitha, India's first woman engineer, to Shakuntala Devi, who was popularly known as the "Human Computer," women continue to leave an indelible mark on the scientific landscape. Today, women scientists are assuming leadership posi-

tions in groundbreaking projects like Chandrayaan-3 and the Aditya-L1 solar mission, showcasing their continued influence and expertise in pushing the boundaries of scientific exploration.

The Government has taken significant strides to bolster STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education, recognising its pivotal role in driving innovation, economic prosperity, and societal advancement. Initiatives like the Vigyan Jyoti Scheme, spearheaded by the Ministry of Science and Technology, are breaking gender barriers by empowering young girls in STEM fields through exposure and mentorship programs. Additionally, programmes like INSPIRE foster innovation

among students through scholarships and research opportunities, while Atal Tinkering Labs nurture creativity and problem-solving skills among school students. The Rashtriya Avishkar Abhiyan promotes a culture of innovation in schools, bridging the gap between theory and real-world applications. Moreover, the government provides research fellowships and grants, digital learning resources through the National Digital Library, and skill enhancement programmes via Skill India, all aimed at nurturing a skilled workforce and fostering growth in STEM-related industries. These concerted efforts underscore the government's commitment to nurturing a robust ecosystem for scientific inquiry and tech-

nological advancement in the country.

Women in STEM in India have been steadily challenging stereotypes and contributing significantly to various disciplines. Pioneers like Dr. Tessy Thomas, known as the "Missile Woman of India," have shattered glass ceilings in fields traditionally dominated by men. Indian women researchers are excelling in areas like space technology, biotechnology, and mathematics, making remarkable advancements. Additionally, the government's Vigyan Jyoti scheme aims to encourage young girls to pursue STEM education and careers, fostering inclusivity. Women have made groundbreaking strides in diverse scientific domains, ranging from astronomy and biology to

engineering and computer science. Their discoveries, innovations, and leadership have enriched our understanding of the world and advanced technological progress.

Women have played a pivotal role in shaping the scientific landscape, yet their contributions have often been overlooked or undervalued. By celebrating the International Day of Women in Science, we aim to rectify this imbalance and bring attention to the remarkable achievements of women scientists. It is crucial to showcase diverse role models in science to inspire young girls and women to pursue their passions and break down the barriers that still exist in the field. While progress has been made, women in science still face numerous challenges.

Gender bias, a lack of representation, and unequal opportunities persist in many scientific fields. It is essential to work towards creating a more inclusive and equitable environment for women in science. By providing equal opportunities, mentorship, and support, we can empower women to thrive and contribute their unique perspectives to scientific advancements. Despite their significant contributions, women in science still face systemic barriers. By encouraging and showcasing the achievements of women in science, we hope to ignite a passion for discovery and innovation in young girls.

(The writer is an IPS officer and the director RACE Lab, Samvedna India, views are personal)

Egypt threatens to suspend key peace treaty

AP ■ RAFAH

Egypt is threatening to suspend its peace treaty with Israel if Israeli troops are sent into the densely populated Gaza border town of Rafah, and says fighting there could force the closure of the territory's main aid supply route, two Egyptian officials and a Western diplomat said on Sunday. The threat to suspend the Camp David Accords, a cornerstone of regional stability for nearly a half-century, came after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said sending troops into Rafah was necessary to win the four-month-old war against the Palestinian militant group Hamas. Over half of Gaza's population of 2.3 million have fled to Rafah to escape fighting in other areas, and are packed into sprawling tent camps and UN-run shelters near the border. Egypt fears a mass influx of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees who may never be allowed to return.



Smoke and explosion following an Israeli bombardment inside the Gaza Strip, as seen from southern Israel, Sunday. The army is battling Palestinian militants across Gaza in the war ignited by Hamas' Oct. 7 attack into Israel.

AP/PTI

The stand-off between Israel and Egypt, two close US allies, comes as aid groups warn that an offensive in Rafah would worsen the already

Netanyahu, in an interview

with ABC News "This Week with George Stephanopoulos", suggested civilians in Rafah could flee north, saying there are "plenty of areas" that have been cleared by the army. He said

Israel is developing a "detailed plan" to relocate them.

But the offensive has caused widespread destruction, particularly in northern Gaza, and heavy fighting is still taking place in central Gaza and the southern city of Khan Younis. A ground operation in Rafah could also force the closure of its crossing, cutting off one of the only avenues for delivering badly needed food and medical supplies.

All three officials confirmed Egypt's threats, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to brief reporters on the sensitive negotiations. Qatar, Saudi Arabia and other countries have also warned of severe repercussions if Israel goes into Rafah.

"An Israeli offensive on Rafah would lead to an unspeakable humanitarian catastrophe and grave tensions with Egypt," European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell wrote on X. Israel and Egypt had fought five

years before signing the Camp David Accords, a landmark peace treaty brokered by then-US President Jimmy Carter in the late 1970s. The treaty includes several provisions governing the deployment of forces on both sides of the border.

Egypt has heavily fortified its border with Gaza, carving out a 5-kilometre buffer zone and erecting concrete walls above and below ground. It has denied Israeli allegations that Hamas still operates smuggling tunnels beneath the border, saying Egyptian forces have full control on their side. But Egyptian officials fear that if the border is breached, the military would be unable to stop a tide of people fleeing into the Sinai Peninsula.

The United Nations says Rafah, which is normally home to less than 300,000 people, now hosts 1.4 million more who fled fighting elsewhere and is "severely overcrowded". Netanyahu said Hamas still has four battalions there. Israel has ordered much of

Gaza's population to flee south with evacuation orders covering two-thirds of the territory, even as it regularly carries out airstrikes in all areas, including Rafah. Airstrikes on the town in recent days have killed dozens of Palestinians, including women and children. Gaza's Health Ministry said Sunday that the bodies of 112 people killed across the territory have been brought to hospitals in the past 24 hours, as well as 173 wounded people.

The fatalities brought the death toll in the strip to 28,176 since the start of the war. The ministry does not distinguish between civilians and fighters but says most of those killed were women and children.

The war began with Hamas' attack into southern Israel on October 7, when Palestinian militants killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducted around 250. Over 100 hostages were released in November.

Israeli drone strike in Lebanon kills 2

AP ■ BEIRUT

An Israeli drone struck a car near Lebanon's southern port city of Sidon on Saturday, killing at least two people and wounding two others, security officials said. The strike came as tensions across the Middle East grow with the Israel-Hamas war, a drone attack last month that killed three US troops in northeastern Jordan near the Syrian border, and attacks by Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels on vessels passing through the Red Sea. The drone strike near the coastal town of Jadra took place about 60 kilometres from the Israeli border, making it one of the farthest inside Lebanon since violence erupted along the Lebanon-Israel border on October 8. An Israeli security official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the target of the strike in Sidon was Hamas official Basel Saleh, who was "injured to an unknown extent".

The official said Saleh was responsible for enlistment of new Hamas recruits in Gaza and the West Bank.

Two Lebanese security officials said the strike damaged a car and killed two people.

Drone strikes in Lebanon blamed on Israel have so far killed several officials from Hezbollah as well as the Palestinian militant group Hamas. The previous farthest strike was the January 2 attack that killed top Hamas official Saleh Arouri in Beirut.

On Saturday night, Israeli forces shelled the southern Lebanese border village of Houla, killing one person and wounding nine as they left a mosque after prayers, state-run National News Agency reported. The attacks in Lebanon came as Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian met in Beirut with Lebanese leaders including the country's caretaker prime minister, parliament speaker and the head of the militant Hezbollah group. Amirabdollahian said that if the US wants to bring stability to the region again, it should work on forcing Israel to end its military operations in

the Gaza Strip. He told reporters after meeting his counterpart Abdallah Bouhabbib that after four months of war, Israel and its backers had not achieved "anything tangible".

In an apparent reference to attacks by Iran-backed fighters in Yemen, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon, Amirabdollahian said that "if American wants calm to prevail in the region, then the mechanism and the solution is to stop the genocide, crimes and the war against Gaza and the West Bank".

He blasted Washington, saying the US is working on two tracks, one of which is sending weapons to Israel "and participating in the genocide in Gaza" and at the same time speaking about reaching a political solution to the war.

The US Central Command announced on Saturday that the US military conducted self-defence strikes against two mobile unmanned surface vessels, four anti-ship cruise missiles, and one mobile land attack cruise missile that were prepared to launch against ships in the Red Sea from Yemen.

The military said the missiles and an unmanned vessel in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen presented an imminent threat to US Navy ships and merchant vessels in the region.

Since November, the rebels have repeatedly targeted ships in the Red Sea over Israel's offensive in Gaza, imperiling a key route for trade between Asia, the Mideast and Europe.

The Houthis' media office said the US-led coalition launched three airstrikes on Salif district in the Red Sea province of Hodeida on Saturday. In response, the US and the UK launched several airstrikes on Houthi-held areas across Yemen, including the rebel-held capital of Sanaa.

The Houthis held a mass funeral in Sanaa on Saturday for 17 of their fighters who they said were killed in strikes by the US-led coalition, according to the Houthi-run SABA news agency.

Special counsel report used our son's death to 'score political points': Jill Biden

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

US First Lady Jill Biden has come out in defence of her husband President Joe Biden's health and memory and she slammed the special counsel for using their son's death to score political points.

Her defence came in response to the voluminous report of Special Counsel Robert Hur in which he said that Biden, 81, "willfully" mishandled classified documents as a private citizen.

The special counsel in his report early this week recommended against filing any charges against Biden for misuse of classified documents when he was a private citizen but made scathing observations on his mental health and memory and claimed that the president did not even remember the date of the death of his son.

"The reason I'm writing is because of what else was in the report: Inaccurate and personal political attacks about Joe. Rather than just saying the case was closed, as they have for others, the Special Counsel claimed that Joe 'couldn't remember the year his son died.' Believe me, like anyone who has lost a child, Beau and his death never leave him," Jill wrote in a mass email to her supporters on Saturday.

"I hope you can imagine how it felt to read that attack — not just as Joe's wife, but as Beau's mother. I don't know what this Special Counsel was trying to achieve," she said.

Beau Biden, who died of brain cancer in 2015, appears 16 times in the pages of the report prepared by Hur, the special counsel appointed to investigate Biden's handling of classified documents after serving as vice president until 2017.

"We should give everyone grace, and I can't imagine someone would try to use our son's death to score political points. If you've experienced a loss like that, you know that you don't measure it in years — you measure it in grief," she said. "May 30th is a day forever etched on our hearts. It shattered me, it shattered our family," she said.

Al-Shabab claims Somali capital attack

AP ■ DUBAI

The al-Qaida-linked militant group al-Shabab claimed an attack that killed four Emirati troops and a Bahraini military officer on a training mission at a military base in the Somali capital, authorities said on Sunday. The attack on Saturday targeted the troops at the General Gordon Military Base in Mogadishu. Details about the attack and whether it killed others remained scarce Sunday, though Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud offered his condolences to the UAE for the loss of its troops.

Early Sunday, the UAE's state-run WAM news agency reported the killing of three of its troops and the Bahraini officer in a "terrorist act". A fourth later died en route back to the Emirates, WAM reported.

WAM released footage of three flag-draped caskets coming off of an Emirati Boeing C-17A Globemaster III at Al Bateen Executive Airport in Abu Dhabi with an honour



guard present. WAM identified the dead as a colonel, two warrant officers and a corporal.

Anwar Gargash, a senior Emirati diplomat, offered condolences to those killed and a quick recovery for the wounded. "No treacherous act will prevent us from continuing the message of security and safety and combating extremism and terrorism in all its forms,"

Gargash wrote on X, formerly Twitter.

The military of Bahrain, an island nation in the Persian Gulf off the coast of Saudi Arabia, later acknowledged the death of a major in a statement carried by the state-run Bahrain News Agency. Al-Shabab claimed the attack in a statement online, alleging it killed multiple people involved in the Emirati military effort.

It described the UAE, a federation of seven sheikhdoms on the Arabian Peninsula, as an "enemy" of Islamic Shariah law for backing the Somali government in its efforts to battle al-Shabab.

Al-Shabab, or "the youth" in Arabic, is a Sunni Islamic extremist group in Somalia born out of that country's years of anarchy following its 1991 civil war. The affiliate of al-Qaida once held Mogadishu. Over time, an African Union-led force, with the backing of the US and other countries, pushed the militants out of Mogadishu. In the years since, al-Shabab has remained a threat as it seeks to overthrow the Western-backed Somali government. Al-Shabab has carried out attacks in neighbouring Kenya as well, since Nairobi provides troops and materiel to the African Union force in Somalia. The US under every president since George W. Bush has launched airstrikes against militants in Somalia, with the number of strikes now exceeding 300, according to

New America, a Washington-based security think tank. The vast majority of those strikes took place under then-President Donald Trump.

The US Embassy in Somalia on Sunday condemned what it called a "cowardly attack" against the training mission.

"We extend our deepest condolences to the loved ones of those who lost their lives in yesterday's deplorable terrorist attack against UAE military trainers and Somali soldiers valiantly working to advance the nation's stability," the embassy said. Somalia has also been an intense interest for Gulf states, particularly during the Qatar diplomatic crisis that gripped the region for several years and saw four nations including the UAE boycott Doha in a political dispute. Somali troops once seized millions of dollars of Emirati cash from a jet at gunpoint, sparking a diplomatic incident between Mogadishu and the UAE that halted its troop training programme there.

Trump mocks Nikki Haley for absence of her husband

American allies worry US growing less dependable

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Former US president Donald Trump has mocked his Republican rival Nikki Haley over the absence of her husband, who is deployed overseas, drawing a sharp reaction from the Indian-American politician who said the person who disrespects military families has no business being commander-in-chief.

Haley's husband Major Michael Haley, a commissioned officer with the South Carolina National Guard, is currently on a year-long deployment with the 218th Maneuver Enhancement Bridge, which is providing support in the Horn of Africa. He deployed in June.

The war of words between two Republican presidential candidates started with a Trump rally on Saturday in South Carolina where the 77-year-old former president, seemingly unaware of his deployment, when started questioning his whereabouts.

"Where's her husband? Oh, he's away. ... What happened to her husband? Where is he? He's gone," Trump said at his rally in



Conway in South Carolina, his first visit to the state this year. Haley, 52, the only candidate against Trump in the Republican Party's nomination race, fired back at Trump's comments later on Saturday.

"Donald, if you have something to say, don't say it behind my back; get on a debate stage and say it to my face," she told a crowd in South Carolina.

"I am proud of Michael's service. Every military family knows it's a sacrifice. I have long talked about the fact that we need to have mental competency tests for [politicians] over the age of 75,"

she said.

Trump claims he would pass that — maybe he would, maybe he wouldn't, she said.

"But if you mock the service of a combat veteran, you don't deserve a driver's license, let alone to be president of the United States," she said.

"Michael is deployed serving the US country, something you know nothing about. Someone who continually disrespects the sacrifices of military families has no business being commander-in-chief," Haley said. Trump's comment on Haley's husband also drew criticism from various quarters.

"Only a sick individual would put down a service member who is deployed. This disrespects every military family in our country. It's exactly the chaos we don't need in America," said General (rt'd) Don Bolduc. In a rare move, Michael Haley fired back at the former president, posting a meme on Twitter reading, "The difference between humans and animals? Animals would never allow the dumbest ones to lead the pack," while mentioning Trump's account in

the caption.

Continuing his attack, Trump alleged that Haley is the candidate of globalists and warmongers who want to spend trillions and trillions of dollars on endless wars.

"The radical left Democrats want Nikki Haley because they know that she's easy to beat. She's very easy to beat."

Haley supports a 23% national sales tax, and she wants to gut Medicare and Social Security..., he said. Earlier, Haley kicked off her "Beast of the Southeast" bus tour with a stop in Newberry.

In an interaction with the media, she spoke about her opponents' lack of stamina and stressed the importance of mental competency tests for politicians over the age of 75.

Her campaign also distributed examples of the mental competency tests used by medical professionals, demonstrating that it should not be a difficult test for those who are seeking the highest office in the land. "(For months) I have always said that (President) Joe Biden was not going to be president."

Sunak says 'totally up for fight' to win UK general election

PTI ■ LONDON

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has said he is "totally up for the fight" of pitching his policies to the electorate to win another term for the governing Conservative Party as he prepares for a general election expected to take place in the second half of the year.

In an interview with The Times this weekend, the 43-year-old British Indian leader said he had reasons to be optimistic because the economy was "pointing in the right direction" and that the "future is going to be better".

"At the beginning of this year there is a sense that the country is pointing in the right direction," he told the newspaper.

"Because economic conditions have improved, because



the plan is working, you are starting to see mortgage rates come down and we have been able to cut taxes. I do believe those pressures are starting to ease and that hopefully over the course of this year, we can continue to make even more

progress," he said. In a message as much for the voters as for the rebels within his own Tory ranks, the Conservative leader reiterated his plan to cut taxes for the hardworking people of the country. "It's because those are my values, those are the values of my party. It's one where hard work should be rewarded. And actually, the best way to express that through the tax system is to cut people's taxes so when they are working hard they get to enjoy more of the rewards of that for themselves and their family," he said.

"Because economic conditions have improved, because the plan is working, you are starting to see mortgage rates come down and we have been able to cut taxes," he added.

"I'm totally up for the fight," he said.

However, Sunak appeared to echo his Chancellor Jeremy Hunt, who has already sought to temper expectations over the size of any tax cuts in his Spring Budget next month, despite senior Tories publicly indicating they are coming. "None of us ever talk about this stuff before budgets. Other people are. I think they're over-interpreting. What the Chancellor and I have said is that of course, our long-term plan is to cut people's taxes," he said.

The Tories continue to lag behind the Opposition Labour Party in surveys, with the Sunak-led government contending with a high rate of anti-incumbency among the electorate.

King Charles thanks public for support

PTI ■ LONDON

Britain's King Charles III on Sunday expressed his "heartfelt thanks" to the British public for their messages of support ever since his cancer diagnosis was revealed by Buckingham Palace this week. The 75-year-old monarch wrote the message from his royal estate at Sandringham in Norfolk, eastern England, in which he also expressed his "lifelong admiration" for the work done by cancer charities. On Sunday, a smiling King Charles also attended church on the estate — the first time since his diagnosis.

He briefly waved at photographers as he walked up to St. Mary Magdalene's church holding an umbrella, accompanied by Queen Camilla. He was then greeted by Reverend Canon Dr Paul Williams before going inside. In his message, the King said he was heartened that



his personal experience of the disease had helped shine a light on the tireless care provided by cancer organisations around the world.

"I would like to express my most heartfelt thanks for the many messages of support and good wishes I have received in recent days," reads the King's message released by Buckingham Palace on Sunday.

"As all those who have been affected by cancer will know, such kind thoughts are the greatest comfort and

encouragement," he said. "It is equally heartening to hear how sharing my diagnosis has helped promote public understanding and shine a light on the work of all those organisations which support cancer patients and their families across the UK and the wider world. My lifelong admiration for their tireless care and dedication is all the greater as a result of my own experience," he added. On Monday, Buckingham Palace announced the King had been diagnosed with cancer while undergoing a procedure for an enlarged prostate. In line with the initial announcement, the latest statement also does not reference any further details about what kind of cancer the monarch has been detected with, the type of treatment he is having or what stage the cancer is at.

Earlier, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak had indicated that the cancer had been

"caught early" as his customary weekly audiences with the King are expected to continue during the treatment. King Charles started his treatment in London before flying out to Sandringham with Queen Camilla, who revealed at an event that her husband was doing "extremely well" since the start of his treatment. The palace has said it will not provide any further details about the diagnosis or the treatment.

In an official statement, it said that the King's recent hospital procedure for benign prostate enlargement, a separate issue of concern was noted and subsequent diagnostic tests have identified a form of cancer. The monarch has commenced a schedule of regular treatments, during which time he has been advised by doctors to postpone public-facing duties. However, he will continue to undertake State business and official paperwork as usual.

Pak parties intensify efforts to form coalition government

PTI ■ LAHORE/ISLAMABAD

The three main political parties in Pakistan on Sunday intensified their efforts for the formation of a coalition government after it became clear that the coup-prone country faced a hung Parliament after general elections marred by allegations of rigging.

The general elections were held on Thursday, but the unusual delay in the announcement of results vitiated the atmosphere as several parties cried foul and some resorted to protests. Former prime minister and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz supreme Nawaz Sharif received the backing of the powerful Pakistan Army chief General Asim Munir on Saturday for his call for a unity government to pull Pakistan out of its current difficulties.

Amidst allegations of vote rigging and inordinate delay in announcing the results, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Sunday published the results of 264 out of 265 contested seats in the 266-member National Assembly. The result of one constituency was withheld by the ECP due to complaints of fraud. Election to one seat was

postponed after the death of a candidate.

Independent candidates, a vast majority of them backed by jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), won 101 seats in the National Assembly.

They were followed by three-time former Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) with 75 seats, which technically is the single largest party in Parliament.

The Pakistan Peoples Party of Bilawal Zardari Bhutto got 54 seats, and the Karachi-based Muttahida Qaumi Movement Pakistan (MQM-P) of Urdu-speaking people who migrated from India during the Partition, got 17 seats. Other smaller parties won the rest of the 12 seats.

To form a government, a party must win 133 seats out of 265 contested seats in the National Assembly.

Overall, 169 seats are needed to secure a simple majority out of its total 336 seats, which include the reserved slots for women and minorities which will be decided later based on proportional representation.

The PML-N was leading the push to form the coalition



government on the pattern of one it set up after Khan, 71, was removed as prime minister through a no-confidence vote in April 2022. Party supremo Sharif, 74, tasked his younger brother former premier Shehbaz Sharif to hold talks on the issue.

The PML-N leaders on Sunday held a meeting with MQM-P leaders in Lahore.

After an hour-long meeting, they have reached a "principle agreement" to work together in the upcoming government, according to a statement released by Sharif's party.

"We will work together in the interest of the country and public," the statement said, adding that basic points had been agreed upon by the two parties.

MQM-P leader Haider Rizvi earlier told Geo News in an interview that his party would be more comfortable with the PML-N as the "two parties don't compete in Karachi" unlike the PPP or other parties.

PML-N President Shehbaz on Saturday met senior PPP leaders Asif Ali Zardari and his Bilawal on Friday night and

discussed the future coalition.

Shehbaz told the party leaders that former president and PPP leader Asif Zardari has demanded the prime minister's slot for PPP Chairman Bilawal and major ministerial portfolios in exchange for support for the PML-N to form the government, sources said.

Party sources added that so far making a coalition with Zardari was the first option the PML-N was exploring but didn't want to give away the slot of prime minister.

Sources claimed the meeting decided that in case the negotiations with the PPP failed, the PML-N would make a coalition government with MQM, JUI-F and other smaller parties, including independents.

They further claimed that in this scenario, the PML-N would make Shehbaz Sharif the prime minister and Maryam Sharif the Chief Minister of Punjab.

"Shehbaz Sharif is the favourite for the PM office for being more close to the military establishment besides the PML-N has more seats in Parliament than the PPP," sources said.

Losing candidates backed by PTI challenge Pak poll results

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan courts have been flooded with petitions by losing candidates who challenged the provisional results in their constituencies within days after the highly polarised general elections in the country, it emerged on Sunday.

Though Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) emerged as the single largest party in the February 8 elections, the number of independent candidates, a vast majority of them backed by jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, were the single largest block of winners.

The PTI claimed that its supported candidates have won the maximum number of seats but the results were manipulated to deprive it of the majority, and in order to turn the tide, its losing candidates have thronged the courts.

According to a report in the Dawn newspaper, a vast

majority of those filing challenges against results are PTI-backed independents, including high-profile politicians such as former Punjab chief minister Parvez Elahi and his wife Qaisera, former Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP) finance minister Taimoor Jhagra and ex-KP speaker Mahmood Jan, Islamabad-based lawyer Shuaib Shaheen, former Punjab health minister Dr Yasmin Rashid, as well as Rehana Dar, mother of Usman Dar who was in-charge youth affairs in the PTI government.

In Lahore, the victories of PML-N supreme Nawaz Sharif, his daughter Maryam Nawaz, PML-N Attaullah Tarar and former defence minister Khawaja Asif were assailed in separate petitions before the high court, which allege manipulation of Form 47s, which showed consolidated results of every constituency. The petitioners claim that they were successful against

their opponents as per the Form 45, showing results of individual polling stations, handed to them.

However, in their absence, their victories were allegedly turned into defeats in the Form 47. The have also alleged collusion in the alteration of election results and demand that the results of Form 47 be prepared according to the Form 45s.

In PP 146 Sialkot, Omar Dar's wife, Ruba Omar, has challenged the election results. According to Form 45, Ruba Omar has won, but she was evidently defeated in Form 47 due to collusion.

Maryam's victory from NA-119 has been challenged by independent candidate Shahzad Farooq, alleging that the presiding officers did not provide Form 45, and the returning officer issued the result in his absence. Farooq claims to have won against Maryam but was defeated due to rigging.

Russia launches 45 drones as Kyiv continues war cabinet reshuffle

AP ■ KYIV

Russian forces launched 45 drones over Ukraine on Sunday in a five-and-a-half-hour barrage, officials said, as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy continued the reshuffle of his war cabinet as the war enters its third year. In a statement, the Ukrainian air force said it had shot down 40 of the Iranian-made Shahed drones over nine different regions, including on the outskirts of the country's capital, Kyiv.

The five-and-a-half-hour attack targeted agricultural facilities and coastal infrastructure, officials for Ukraine's southern defense forces wrote on Telegram. They said that a strike in the Mykolaiv region had injured one person, sparking a fire and damaging nearby residential buildings.

Another person was injured in Ukraine's Dnipropetrovsk region when a blaze broke out due to falling debris from a destroyed drone,



said the head of the region's military administration, Serhiy Lysak. The strikes come as Zelenskyy continues his shake-up of military commanders in a bid to maintain momentum against attacking Russian forces. Kyiv announced on

Sunday that former deputy defence minister Lt Gen Alexander Pavlyuk would become the new commander of Ukraine's ground forces. The post was previously held by Col Gen Oleksandr Syrskyi, who was named on Thursday

as the replacement for Ukraine's outgoing military chief, Gen Valerii Zaluzhnyi.

New presidential decrees also named Yuriy Sodal, the former head of Ukraine's marine corps, as the new commander of Ukraine's combined forces; Brig Gen Ihor Skibiuk as commander of Ukraine's air assault forces; and Maj Gen Ihor Plahuta as commander of Ukraine's territorial defense forces.

Incoming commander-in-chief Syrskyi has signalled that his immediate goals include improving troop rotation at the front lines and harnessing the power of new technology at a time when Kyiv's forces are largely on the defensive. In a statement on Telegram Saturday, Zelenskyy said that he hoped to "reboot" the upper levels of Ukraine's armed forces with experienced combat commanders. "Now, people who are well-known in the army and who themselves know well what the army needs are taking on new responsibilities," he said.

Finns vote for a new president

AP ■ HELSINKI

Voters in Finland are choosing on Sunday between two experienced politicians to be their next president, whose main task will be to steer the Nordic country's foreign and security policy now that it is a member of NATO, following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Former prime minister Alexander Stubb, 55, on the centre right, and former foreign minister Pekka Haavisto, 65, from the green left, largely agree on Finland's foreign policy and security priorities.

These include maintaining a hard line toward Moscow and Russia's current leadership, strengthening security ties with Washington, and the need to help Ukraine both militarily and at a civilian level. Finland shares a 1,340-kilometer (832-mile) border with Russia.

Unlike in most European countries, the president of Finland holds executive power in formulating foreign and security policy together with the government, especially concerning countries outside the European Union such as the United States, Russia and China.

The head of state also commands the military — particularly important in Europe's current security environment and the changed geopolitical situation of Finland, which joined NATO in April 2023 in the aftermath of Russia's attack on Ukraine a year earlier.

A politician with the conservative National Coalition Party who led the government in 2014-2015 and earlier held several other Cabinet posts, Stubb took the top spot in the first round of the election on January 28 with 27.2 per cent of the votes and is the favourite to win the presidency.

Haavisto, the runnerup in the first round, was Finland's top diplomat in 2019-2023 and the main negotiator of its entry into NATO. A former conflict mediator with the United Nations and a devout environmentalist, Haavisto took 25.8 per cent of the votes in the first round. This is his third bid for the presidency. He is running as an independent although he is a former leader of the Green League.

In the last days of campaigning tiny differences in style and approach between the candidates have emerged.

Stubb and Haavisto differ in their stance on the hypothetical question of whether Finland would allow the transportation of the alliance's nuclear weapons through its territory. "Nuclear weapons are a strong element of our deterrence and our security. We signed our NATO agreement without any kind of limits," Stubb told The Associated Press during a campaign event just outside the capital, Helsinki, on Saturday. But "we (Stubb and Haavisto) also agree that no one is offering us nuclear weapons ... we don't want any nuclear weapons."

Haavisto said on Saturday that he does not favour nuclear arms being transported via Finland in a crisis situation. His country of 5.6 million makes up a substantial part of NATO's northeastern flank and is the European Union's external border in the north.

"I think there hasn't been any need to transport nuclear weapons to Finland or over Finland. As I've seen during NATO negotiations, the current nuclear policies of NATO are well-established and there is no need of changing them," he said.

CEO of major Nigerian bank killed in California helicopter crash

AP ■ CALIFORNIA

The CEO of one of Nigeria's largest banks was killed on Friday along with his wife and son when a helicopter they were riding in crashed near Interstate 15 in southern California's Mojave Desert.

Herbert Wigwe, chief executive of Access Bank, was among the six people on board when the helicopter crashed shortly after 10 pm. Bamofin Abimbola Ogunbanjo, former chair of NGX Group, the Nigerian stock exchange, was also killed. Their deaths were confirmed by Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, a former Nigerian finance minister who is now the director general of the World Trade Organization.

"Terribly saddened by the news of the terrible loss of Herbert Wigwe ... his wife and son as well as Bimbo

Ogunbanjo in a helicopter crash," Okonjo-Iweala wrote in a post on X, formerly known as Twitter. "May the souls of the departed rest in perfect peace."

The death of Wigwe (57) shocked many in Nigeria and in the banking sector where he was widely seen as an industry leader having been involved in two of the country's biggest banks, including Guaranty Trust Bank where he was previously executive director.

Under Wigwe's leadership, Access Bank's assets and presence grew beyond borders in several African countries. His death is "a terrible blow" for Nigeria and Africa's banking industry, Nigerian presidential spokesman Bayo Onanuga wrote on X. "Wigwe had a big vision to make Access Holdings (the parent company) Africa's biggest, with all the unquenchable thirst for acquisitions,"

Onanuga added. Wigwe's interests also spanned the education sector. His private university, founded in Nigeria's oil-rich Niger Delta region where he was from, is scheduled to open in September. Last year he said the university was "an opportunity for me to give back to society."

"This is surreal and I am lost for words," Festus Keyamo, Nigeria's minister of aviation and aerospace development, wrote in a post on X. "May Almighty God comfort his aged parents and sibling ... his immediate family members, his staff, friends across Nigeria and dependents." The crash happened east of Interstate 15 near Halloran Springs Road and not far from the California-Nevada border. Halloran Springs Road crosses the highway in an area known to travellers for an abandoned gas station with a sign declaring "Lo Gas" and "Eat".

Hungary president resigns over pardon to man convicted in child sexual abuse case

AP ■ BUDAPEST

Hungary's conservative president resigned on Saturday amid public outcry over a pardon she granted to a man convicted as an accomplice in a child sexual abuse case, a decision that unleashed an unprecedented political scandal for the long-serving nationalist government.

Katalin Novák (46) announced in a televised message that she would step down from the presidency, an office she has held since 2022. Her decision came after more than a week of public outrage after it was revealed that she issued a presidential pardon in April 2023 to a man convicted of hiding a string of child sexual abuses in a state-run children's home. "I issued a pardon that caused bewilderment and unrest for many people," Novák said on Saturday. "I

made a mistake." Novák's resignation came as a rare episode of political turmoil for Hungary's nationalist governing party Fidesz, which has ruled with a constitutional majority since 2010. Under the leadership of populist Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, Fidesz has been accused of dismantling democratic institutions and rigging the electoral system and media in its favour.

Novák, a key Orbán ally and a former vice president of Fidesz, served as the minister for families until her appointment to the presidency. She has been outspoken in advocating for traditional family values and the protection of children.

She was the first female president in Hungary's history, and the youngest person to ever hold the office. But her term came to an end after she pardoned a man sentenced in

2018 to more than three years in prison. He was found guilty of pressuring victims to retract their claims of sexual abuse by the institution's director, who was sentenced to eight years for abusing at least 10 children between 2004 and 2016.

"I decided in favour of clemency in April of last year in the belief that the convict did not abuse the vulnerability of the children entrusted to him. I made a mistake," Novák said on Saturday. "I apologise to those I have hurt and to any victims who may have felt I am not standing up for them."

"As head of state, I am addressing you for the last time today. I resign from the office of president of the republic," she said. Also implicated was Judit Varga, another key Fidesz figure who was minister of justice at the time and endorsed the pardon. Varga was expected to lead the

list of European Parliament candidates from Fidesz when elections are held this summer. But in a Facebook post on Saturday, Varga announced that she would take political responsibility and "retire from public life, resigning my seat as a member of parliament and also as leader of the EP list."

At the presidential headquarters in Budapest on Saturday evening, around 200 people gathered in what was originally planned as a protest to call on Novák to resign. After her announcement, attendees said they were happy, but that it wasn't enough to fundamentally change Orbán's system of governance.

"I'm glad that she resigned but I think things aren't solved this way. She's not the main criminal, you've got to look all the way to the top," said Anna Bujna.

Pope and Milei embrace after pontiff canonises Argentina's first female saint

AP ■ VATICAN CITY

Pope Francis and Argentine President Javier Milei embraced on Sunday in St. Peter's Basilica, as Argentine faith and politics came together during a Mass to canonise the country's first female saint.

The ceremony to declare Mama Antula a saint marked the first meeting between the Argentine pope and Milei, who once called Francis an "imbecile" for defending social justice. The president, who was seated to Francis' right on the side of the main altar throughout the ceremony, bent over and gave the pope a big bearhug when Francis was wheeled over to him at the end of the service. Mama Antula was an 18th century laywoman

who ministered to the poor and helped keep Jesuit spirituality alive in Argentina after the religious order — to which the pope belongs — was suppressed. Argentines flocked to the canonisation, which turned into something of an Argentine fiesta in Rome. Milei waved to supporters in the pews as he entered the basilica and posed for selfie photos before the liturgy, while Argentine women, in particular, celebrated a saint who defied the norms for women of her time to spread the faith. In his homily, Francis praised Mama Antula as a model of charity and urged the faithful to really touch the wounds of the poor, as Jesus overcame fear and prejudice to touch the wounds of lepers. "How many

suffering men and women do we meet on the sidewalks of our cities," he said. "And how many fears, prejudices and inconsistencies, even among those who are believers and call themselves Christians, contribute to wounding them all the more!"

Milei is to meet privately with Francis on Monday, before also having private talks with Italy's far-right Premier Giorgia Meloni and the president. During his campaign, Milei described Francis as an "imbecile" and "the representative of malignance on Earth".

Francis spoke at length with Milei after he was elected in December and has indicated he has forgiven him for the campaign rhetoric. Francis has said he is considering visiting



Argentina later this year in what would be his first trip home since his 2013 election. After arriving in Rome on Friday from Israel, where Milei announced the relocation of

the Argentine embassy to Jerusalem, the president visited the Colosseum and the church housing one of Michelangelo's best-known sculptures: a seated Moses. In

an Instagram post accompanying a photo of himself looking at the sculpture, Milei wrote his frequent motto "Long live freedom damn it....!"

The president, who describes himself as an anarcho-capitalist, has promised to drastically reduce state spending to shore up a government budget deficit that he says is fuelling inflation, which finished 2023 at 211 per cent.

On Sunday, he appeared firmly engaged in the Mass, making the sign of the cross several times, receiving Communion and burying his head in his hands as he knelt in prayer afterward.

Mama Antula, born María Antonia de Paz y Figueroa, is a figure beloved to Argentines, a woman who left behind a life

of privilege to spread Ignatian spirituality across Argentina after the Jesuits were ordered expelled from Spain's colonies. She is held up in particular by Argentine women as a model of strength and independence, at a time when women's options in life included marriage or entering the convent.

"The first female saint — it's an enormous step forward," said Argentine pilgrim Annabella Lopez as she waited for the Mass to begin. "It's a pity it couldn't have happened before, but fine, now women are starting to have more visibility and this is a great step also for the church."

Silvia Correale, who spearheaded Mama Antula's sainthood process, said she remembered she first met the future

Pope Francis when he was archbishop of Buenos Aires and Mama Antula's candidacy had just cleared an important hurdle in the Vatican.

"I know that he esteems her a lot, like all the Jesuits of Argentina and Uruguay, because they consider her their spiritual mother," Correale told The Associated Press in the runup to the ceremony. "They know that she kept the treasure of the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius alive in the years they weren't there." But the current archbishop of Buenos Aires, Archbishop Jorge Ignacio García Cuerva, said it would be wrong to think that Mama Antula is only being made a saint now because a Jesuit Argentine pope happens to be running the Catholic Church.

Market cap of four most valued firms jumps ₹2.18 lakh crore

LIC, SBI lead gainers

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Four of the top-10 most valued firms together added Rs 2.18 lakh crore in market valuation last week, with Life Insurance Corporation and State Bank of India emerging as the biggest gainers. From the top-10 pack, Reliance Industries, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Life Insurance Corporation of

India (LIC) and SBI were the gainers. They collectively added Rs 2,18,598.29 crore in market capitalisation. On the other hand, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Infosys, Bharti Airtel, Hindustan Unilever and ITC faced erosion from their valuation to the tune of Rs 1,06,631.39 crore. Last week, the BSE benchmark declined by 490.14 points or 0.67 per cent. Market valuation of LIC jumped Rs 86,146.47 crore to Rs 6,83,637.38 crore. The share price of LIC on Monday jumped nearly 6 per cent to hit the Rs 1,000 mark for the first



time. SBI added Rs 65,908.26 crore, taking its valuation to Rs 6,46,365.02 crore. Market valuation of TCS climbed Rs 61,435.47 crore to Rs 15,12,743.31 crore and that of Reliance advanced Rs 5,108.09 crore to reach Rs 19,77,136.54 crore. Shares of TCS jumped 4 per cent on Tuesday, taking its market valuation to above Rs 15 lakh crore. However, market capitalisation (mcap) of HDFC Bank declined by Rs 32,963.94 crore to Rs 10,65,808.71 crore. The valuation of ITC eroded by Rs 30,698.62 crore to Rs 5,18,632.02 crore.

Mcap of Bharti Airtel fell by Rs 16,132.15 crore and that of Infosys went lower by Rs 10,044.09 crore to Rs 6,92,980.35 crore. The valuation of ICICI Bank dipped Rs 9,779.06 crore to Rs 7,09,254.77 crore and that of Hindustan Unilever diminished by Rs 7,013.53 crore to Rs 5,69,587.91 crore. In the ranking of top-10 most valued firms, Reliance Industries continued to rule the chart followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Infosys, LIC, State Bank of India, Airtel, Hindustan Unilever and ITC.



FPIs infuse over ₹15,000 crore in debt market in February

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) continued their bullish stance on the country's debt markets with a net infusion of over Rs 15,000 crore so far this month, on the back of inclusion of Indian government bonds in the JP Morgan Index along with relatively stable economy. This followed a net investment of Rs 19,836 crore in January, making it the highest monthly inflow in more than six years. This was the highest inflow since June 2017, when they infused Rs 25,685 crore. On the other hand, foreign investors pulled out more than Rs 3,000 crore from equities during the period under review. Before this, they withdrew a massive Rs 25,743 crore in January, data with the depositories showed.

"The main trigger for this divergent trend in equity and debt is the high valuation in the Indian equity market and the rising bond yields in the US," V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services, said. Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director - Manager Research, Morningstar Investment Research India, attributed the outflow from equities to the uncertainty surrounding the interest rate environment, both domestically as well as globally. According to the data, FPIs made a net investment of Rs

15,093 crore in the debt markets in this month (till February 9). With this, the total investment by FPIs reached over Rs 34,930 crore in 2024. They have been injecting money in the debt markets for the past few months. FPIs infused Rs 18,302 crore in the debt market in December, Rs 14,860 crore in November, and Rs 6,381 crore in October.

"The Indian debt markets witnessed a reversal in FPI flow trend last year after the announcement of inclusion of Indian government bonds in the JP Morgan Index. This was one of the major drivers for the robust flows from FPIs, along with relatively stable economy," Srivastava said. JP Morgan Chase & Co. In September last year announced that it will add Indian government bonds to its benchmark emerging market index from June 2024.

This landmark inclusion is anticipated to benefit India by attracting around USD 20-40 billion in the subsequent 18 to 24 months. This inflow is expected to make Indian bonds more accessible to foreign investors and potentially strengthen the rupee, thereby bolstering the economy, he added. Overall, the total FPI flows in 2023 stood at Rs 1.71 lakh crore in equities and Rs 68,663 crore in the debt markets. Together, they infused Rs 2.4 lakh crore into the capital market.

Government examining FDI flow from China in Paytm Payments Services

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government is examining foreign direct investment from China in Paytm Payments Services Ltd (PPSL), the payment aggregator subsidiary of One97 Communications Ltd, sources said.

In November 2020, PPSL had applied for licence with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to operate as a payment aggregator under the guidelines on Regulation of Payment Aggregators and Payment Gateways. However, in November 2022, RBI rejected PPSL's application and asked the company to resubmit it, so as to comply with Press Note 3 under FDI rules. One97 Communications Ltd (OCL) has investment from Chinese firm Ant Group Co. Subsequently, the company filed the required application on December 14, 2022 with Government of India for past downward investment from OCL into the company in order to comply with Press Note 3 prescribed under FDI guidelines.

An inter-ministerial committee is examining investments from China in PPSL and decision would be taken on the FDI issue after due consideration and

comprehensive examination, sources said. Under Press Note 3, the government had made its prior approval mandatory for foreign investments in any sector from countries that share land border with India to curb opportunistic takeovers of domestic firms following the COVID-19 pandemic. Countries which share land borders with India are China, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Bhutan, Nepal, Myanmar and Afghanistan.

A query sent to OCL for comments remained unanswered till the filing of the story. The Reserve Bank last month barred Paytm Payments Bank Ltd (PPBL), an associate company of OCL, from accepting deposits or top-ups in any customer account, prepaid instruments, wallets, and FASTags, among others after February 29, 2024. The Reserve Bank's action against PPBL follows a comprehensive system audit report and subsequent compliance validation report of external auditors.

RBI had said that these reports revealed persistent non-compliances and continued material supervisory concerns in PPBL, warranting further supervisory action.

Direct tax collection grows 20 per cent, reaches ₹15.60 lakh crore

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Net direct tax collection so far in current fiscal grew 20 per cent year-on-year to Rs 15.60 lakh crore, which is 80 per cent of revised budget estimates for full fiscal year.

"The provisional figures of direct tax collections continue to register steady growth. Direct tax collections up to 10th February, 2024 show that gross collections are at Rs



18.38 lakh crore, which is 17.30 per cent higher than the gross collections for the corresponding period of last year," Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) said in a statement. Direct tax collection, net of refunds, till February 10 of FY24 stands at Rs 15.60 lakh crore, which is 20.25 per cent higher than the net collections in the corresponding period last year. This collection is 80.23 per

cent of the total revised estimates of direct taxes for 2023-24. Refunds amounting to Rs 2.77 lakh crore have been issued during April 1, 2023 to February 10, 2024. Gross revenue collections for Corporate Income Tax (CIT) and Personal Income Tax (PIT) also showed a steady growth. Growth rate for CIT was 9.16 per cent while for PIT, it was 25.67 per cent (PIT only).

Adani Ports secures top position for climate actions

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd (APSEZ) on Sunday said it has secured top position for its climate actions and environmental performance in assessments done by four global rating agencies.

The assessments were done by CDP, S&P, Sustainalytics and Moody's.

While the company secured 'leadership band' in CDP Climate Assessment 2023, it ranked first on the environmental dimension among 324 companies in the transport and transport



infrastructure sector by S&P Global CSA 2023, a statement said. The company also secured the top rank in the marine ports sector on a low carbon transition rating by Sustainalytics. It also received the 'advanced' rating in Moody's

Energy Transition Rating and the first rank in the overall ESG Assessment and Strategy review in their last update.

APSEZ is a part of the globally diversified Adani Group and is the largest port developer and operator in India.

Jeff Bezos sells nearly 12 million Amazon shares

AP ■ SEATTLE

Jeff Bezos filed a statement with federal regulators indicating his sale of nearly 12 million shares of Amazon stock worth more than USD 2 billion. The Amazon executive chairman notified the US Securities and Exchange Commission of the sale of 11,997,698 shares of common stock on February 7 and February 8. The collective value of the shares of Amazon, which is based in Seattle where he founded the company in a garage about three decades ago, is more than USD 2.04 billion.

Akums Drugs eyes ₹680 crore via fresh issue

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Akums Drugs and Pharmaceuticals Ltd has filed draft papers with capital markets regulator Sebi to raise funds through an initial public offering (IPO).

The initial share-sale is a combination of fresh issue of equity shares worth Rs 680 crore and an offer-for-sale (OFS) of 1.86 crore shares by promoters and an existing investor, according to the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP) filed on Saturday. Those selling shares in the OFS are Sanjeev Jain, Sandeep Jain and Ruby QC Investment Holdings Pte Ltd.

The company is looking to raise Rs 136 crore through a pre-IPO placement. If such placement is undertaken, then fresh issue size will be reduced. Proceeds from the fresh issue will be used to repay debt, fund working capital requirements of the company, pursue inorganic growth initiatives through acquisition and for general corporate purposes. Founded in 2004, Akums is a pharmaceutical contract development and manufacturing organization (CDMO) offering a comprehensive range of pharmaceutical products and services in India and overseas. As of September 30, 2023, key clients of the company include Alembic Pharmaceuticals, Alkem Laboratories, Cipla, Dabur India, Dr. Reddy's Laboratories, Sun Pharmaceutical Industries, among others.

Close to ₹750 crore stuck in projects in Qatar, says Voltas

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Tata Group firm Voltas is facing a major headwind in Qatar as around Rs 750 crore has been stuck due to delays in the realisation of overdue receivables and execution timelines, said its MD and CEO Pradeep Bakshi.

In some projects, bank guarantees were "unethically" encashed by some contractors, which was an "uncalled" action to make quick money, derailing the international project business of Tata Group firm in the December quarter, he added. "Unprecedented things are happening in that area, especially in Qatar, wherein, unfortunately, our dues are

not being paid to us timely, and inordinate delays are happening. We have completed the project and handed it over, and despite that, payments are not made," Bakshi told PTI.

Voltas has already approached the Indian government for help on the issue and also approached the Embassy in Qatar. MEP (mechanical, electrical, and plumbing) contractor Voltas has completed the projects in Qatar and handed them over as per the contract. However, its bills are not getting certified and paid.

"There has to be some basic ethics when you do business with your partners... Unfortunately, our payments are not coming.

Duty concession on gold major concern in FTA with Peru: GTRI

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Duty concessions on gold, which accounts for 80 per cent of India's imports from Peru, is the most challenging issue for New Delhi under the proposed free trade agreement with the South American nation, a report said on Sunday. Economic think tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said that gold, a high-value product with low volume, attracts a 10 per cent basic customs duty in India, and even minor tariff concessions could lead to a significant increase in imports.

India and the South American nation Peru are negotiating a free trade agreement to promote bilateral trade and

investments between the two countries.

In such pacts, two trading partners either significantly reduce or eliminate customs duties on the maximum number of goods traded between them, besides easing norms to promote trade in services.

The next round of talks is expected to start this week in Lima, Peru.

"Tariff concessions on gold, accounting for USD 1.8 billion or 80 per cent of India's imports from Peru in FY23, is the most challenging issue for India," GTRI founder Ajay Srivastava said. He argued that after tariff concessions under the India-UAE free trade agreement, gold imports from the UAE, India's second-largest gold supplier, doubled in 2023



compared to 2022. "Peru, the fifth-largest supplier to India, could see a similar surge in gold imports if concessions are made," the report said.

In 2023, India's global imports of unwrought gold are estimated at USD 43 billion, with Switzerland accounting for 40 per cent of these

imports, it said, adding that given Peru's gold mines, its gold would easily meet any Rules of Origin criteria. "FTAs offer concessions on effective duties rather than on the bound duty. Excluding gold from an FTA would violate the World Trade Organization's Article XXIV, which requires duty cuts on

substantial trade for FTAs," Srivastava said.

He also said that India's bound duty on gold is set at 40 per cent, but the current applied tariff is 10 per cent.

"FTAs allow concessions in effective duties and not on bound duty. If the FTA does not include gold, it may not meet the WTO Article XXIV condition for FTAs to have duty cuts on substantial trade," Srivastava said.

Peru has a bilateral trade pact with major economies like the US, EU, China, Australia, and Singapore. It also has multi-country agreements with the Pacific Alliance (Chile, Colombia, and Mexico) and the Andean Community (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador). These FTAs allow tariff-free imports of most products imported into Peru.

Majority of employees feel difficulty in adapting work from office module: Report

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Amid companies encouraging their employees to return to the office, a majority of workers interviewed feel that it will be difficult for them to adapt to this transition, according to a report. There is an apprehension among employees regarding the adaptation to the work-from-office module, and 69 per cent of respondents have expressed concerns about the potential challenges associated with this transition, a report by staffing solutions and HR services



provider Genius Consultants said. However, 25 per cent of employees showcased resilience and confidence in their ability to navigate and adapt to the renewed office environment, it added. The report is based on an online survey among 1,213

employees from October 26 to November 30 across sectors like banking and finance, education, FMCG, hospitality, HR solutions, IT, ITES, and manufacturing. The report also anticipated a potential rise in attrition as a consequence of the work-from-office call.

A significant 82 per cent of employees have expressed concerns, citing the increasing availability of work-from-home job opportunities in the market, the report said. This presents the evolving nature of the job market and the need for organisations to

consider and address the preferences and demands of their workforce, it added. On the flip side, 12 per cent of respondents do not perceive attrition as a major concern, signalling a degree of optimism about the benefits of the in-office experience. About 67 per cent believe that work-from-office facilitates the integration of new employees with the larger workforce, serving as a catalyst for instilling organisational values. This perspective highlights the importance employees place on interpersonal connections.

ONGC Q3 profit falls 14 per cent to ₹9,536 crore

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) on Sunday reported 14 per cent drop in net profit for the third quarter ended December 31 as oil and gas prices fell. Standalone net profit of Rs 9,536 crore in October-December 2023 (third quarter of 2023-24 fiscal year) was 13.7 per cent lower than Rs 11,045 crore earning in the same period of previous financial year, the company said in a statement. The earning was lower as

price realised for crude oil the firm produced and sold in the quarter fell 6.4 per cent to USD 81.59 per barrel. Gas price too was 24.2 per cent lower at USD 6.5 per mmBtu. Also contributing to lower profit was a decline in production of crude oil, which is converted into fuel like petrol and diesel at refineries, and natural gas which is used to generate electricity, produce fertilizer, turned into CNG and piped to kitchens for cooking. Crude oil production dropped 3.3 per cent to 5.22 million tonne while gas

output was 4.3 per cent lower at 5.12 billion cubic meters. Gross revenue was down 10 per cent at Rs 34,789 crore in Q3. The board of the company approved a second interim dividend of 80 per cent or Rs 4 a share. "The total payout on this account will be Rs 5,032 crore," the statement said. This is in addition to the first interim dividend of Rs 5.75 per share declared last year. ONGC's standalone net profit in the first nine months of the current fiscal fell 24 per cent to Rs 29,767 crore as oil price realised dropped to \$75.55 a

U-19 WORLD CUP FINAL India lose by 79 runs to Australia

PTI ■ BENONI (SOUTH AFRICA)

India's batting lineup misfired when it mattered the most as they suffered a heartbreaking 79-run loss to Australia in the final of the U-19 World Cup here on Sunday. Opting to bat, Australia first posted 253 for 7, courtesy Oliver Peake's enterprising 43-ball 46 and Harjas Singh's 55 off 64 balls, and then returned to bowl out the five-time champions for 174 in 43.5 overs. Australia, thus, became four-time champions. Chasing 254, opener Adarsh Singh made a 77-ball 47 but India kept losing wickets at regular intervals to collapse to 122 for 8 in 31.5 overs. Number 8 batter Murugan Abhishek (42 off 46 balls) then played an entertaining knock but it was too little and too late. The loss brought back memories of Indian senior team's gut-wrenching loss to Australia in the 50-over



World Cup final at home in November last year. For Australia, seamer Mahli Beardman (3/15) and off-spinner Raf MacMillan (3/43) did most of the damage. Callum Vidler (2/35) and Charlie Anderson (1/42) were the other wicket-takers. Earlier, Harjas top-scored for Australia with 55, while Weibgen and opener Harry Dixon made 48 and 42 respectively. Later, Peake propped up Australia with his breezy knock. Raj Limbani was the most successful Indian bowler with figures of 3/38, while Naman Tiwari picked up two wickets for 63 runs in nine overs. **BRIEF SCORES:** Australia: 253/7 in 50 overs (Harjas Singh 55, Hugh Weibgen 48, Harry Dixon 42, Oliver Peake not out 46; Raj Limbani 3/38, Naman Tiwari 2/63). India: 174 all out in 43.5 overs (Adarsh Singh 47; Mahli Beardman 3/15, Raf MacMillan 3/43).



Real show stealer was Boomball, says Ashwin

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Lavishing praise on teammate Jasprit Bumrah, senior India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin said "Boomball" stole the show in the second Test against England and the pacer reaching top of the ICC rankings across three formats is a "Himalayan feat". Bumrah displayed brilliance with the ball to play a key role in the team's series-levelling 106-run win in the second Test in Visakhapatnam. He put up a reverse swing master-class in England's first innings that yielded him six wickets (6/45), following it up with a three-wicket haul in their second essay for match figures of 9 for 91. His performance enabled him to jump to number one in the Test rankings list, becoming the first Indian pacer to achieve the feat. Bumrah has also held the top spot in the ODI and T20 rankings previously. "The real show stealer was BoomBall. Jasprit Bumrah has bowled extraordinarily," Ashwin said on his YouTube channel. "He is the leading wicket-taker with 14 wickets and also the No.1 ranked Test bowler. The first India fast bowler to achieve number one across all formats. I am a big fan of his and this is a Himalayan feat." Ashwin said that the extraordinary vibe and energy on the fourth day of the second Test helped India secure a favourable result. "We came into the fourth day with it all being even-stevens. But our extraordinary vibe, energy and team performance helped us level the series 1-1." The five-match series will be played across Hyderabad, Visakhapatnam, Rajkot, Ranchi and Dharamsala and Ashwin noted that most Indian players have not played Test cricket at these venues. "There's never been a marquee Test series like this in five such venues before. In 2017, we played Australia in Dharamsala and Ranchi and then Pune and Bengaluru. Usually, if there is a 4-5 match Test series at least one or two happen in metro cities. "Unlike that, this time it's happening in venues that weren't part of World Cup matches. "For most of the Indian players, these venues are new. There are a lot of players playing in our team who haven't played a first-class or Test match in Vizag stadium. I'm not sure that is possible in any other country. But possible in India as there are so many Test venues."



Leach ruled out of remaining three Tests against India

PTI ■ LONDON

England left-arm spinner Jack Leach was on Sunday ruled out of the remaining three Tests against India with a left knee injury, announced the England and Wales Cricket Board. However, no replacement will be called up for Leach, an indication that England will continue with the spin trio of Tom Hartley, Rehan Ahmed and Shoaib Bashir for the rest of the tour. Joe Root is the visitors' fourth spin option behind the three regular spinners. Leach had sustained the injury during England's first Test victory in Hyderabad and missed the second Test in Visakhapatnam as a result. "He will fly home from Abu Dhabi in the next 24 hours, where the England team has been staying ahead of the third Test in Rajkot, which starts on Thursday (February 15). "Leach will work closely with the England and Somerset medical teams in respect of his rehabilitation," stated the ECB in a media release. The 32-year-old Leach has taken 126 wickets in 36 Tests, besides being a handy lower-order batter.

Zimbabwe Cricket to restructure after WC qualification woes

PTI ■ HARARE

Zimbabwe Cricket (ZC) has decided to effect far-reaching changes in both its domestic and development pathway following failure to qualify for the 2023 Men's ODI World Cup and the 2024 Men's T20 World Cup. As a first step, the ZC board, which met on Saturday, decided to appoint 51-year-old former first-class player Walter Chawaguta as the head coach of the senior women's national team and accepted the resignation of U19 men's national team head coach Prosper Utseya. It also decided to appoint the senior and U19 men's team coaches on an urgent basis. A ZC statement said that the



board had "adopted the comprehensive report presented by a committee of inquiry that was established to probe Zimbabwe's World Cup qualification failures as well as to review ZC's cricket affairs structure".

The three-member committee was headed by lawyer Lloyd Mhishi. "The three-member

Committee, chaired by Lloyd Mhishi, presented its report to the board after gathering input from various stakeholders, both internal and external... The board resolved to adopt the report in its entirety and to immediately implement the committee's recommendations," the statement added. Among the recommendations accepted by ZC board are a complete restructuring of the cricket affairs department and its personnel, overhaul of the domestic and development pathway, advertising for the head coach's job for the national senior men's and U19 teams and restructuring of the coaching set-up at first-class level.

Debutant Sharma completes 10 wickets match haul

PTI ■ THUTHIPET (PUDUCHERRY)

Left-arm spinner Vanshaj Sharma completed a maiden ten-wicket match haul on his debut as Jammu and Kashmir dismissed Puducherry for 67 in their chase of 87 to register a 19-run win in the Ranji Trophy group D match here on Sunday. Resuming at 35 for 7, Puducherry folded in 35.3 overs with the 20-year-old Sharma claiming all the remaining three wickets, returning with figures of 5 for 16 to go with his first innings figures of 5 for 74.



On Saturday, another left-arm spinner Abid Mushtaq notched up a 10-wicket match haul, his second in First-Class cricket. He had taken five for 28 in the second innings, returning with figures of 25-3-64-5 in the first innings.


Mushtaq was adjudged the Player-of-the-match for his exploits at the Cricket Association of Pondicherry (CAP) Siechem ground here. With the win, Jammu and Kashmir continued their unbeaten run and grabbed the third place with 18 points, behind Baroda and Madhya Pradesh. For Pondicherry (15), their hopes of reaching the knockout stage is almost over. **Brief Score:** J&K 106 and 152 (Sagar Udeshi 3/48) beat Puducherry 172 and 67 all out in 35.3 overs (Damodaran Rohit 17; Vanshaj Sharma 5/16, Abid Mushtaq 5/28) by 19 runs.

Sunrisers claim back to back SA20 titles

PTI ■ CAPE TOWN

Sunrisers Eastern Cape won back-to-back SA20 titles after an empathic 89-run victory over Durban's Super Giants at Newlands here. After topping the group stage, the Sunrisers delivered a clinical performance in the final on Saturday. Half-centuries from Tom Abell (55) and Tristan Stubbs (56 not out) along with contributions

from Jordan Hermann and captain Aiden Markram, who both contributed 42, respectively, saw the Sunrisers post a formidable 204/3. The defending champions then bowled out the Super Giants for a paltry 115 in 17 overs. Partnerships were crucial in the Sunrisers' innings with Hermann and Abell setting up the winning total with a 90-run stand for the second wicket after the early loss of Dawid Malan.

**AAVAS FINANCIERS LIMITED**
(Formerly known as Au HOUSING FINANCE LIMITED) (CIN:L65922RJ2011PLC034297)
Regd. & Corp. Office: 201-202, 2nd Floor, South End Square, Mansarovar Industrial Area, Jaipur. 302020

Demand Notice Under Section 13(2) of Securitisation Act of 2002
As the Loan Account Became NPA therefore The Authorised Officer (AO) Under section 13 (2) Of Securitisation And Reconstruction of Financial Assets And Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 had issued 60 day demand notice to the borrower as given in the table. According to the Notice if the Borrower does not deposit the Amount within 60 days, the amount will be recovered from Auction of the security as given below. As the demand Notice send to the borrower/guarantor has not been served, copy of demand notice has also been affixed on the secured assets as given below. Therefore you the borrower is informed to deposit the loan amount along with future interest and recovery expenses within 60 days, otherwise under the provisions of section 13 (4) and 14 of the said Act, the AO is free to take possession of the Security as given below.

Name of the Borrower	Date and Amount of Demand Notice Under Sec. 13(2)	Description of Mortgaged property
LALIT RAM SAHU, KHEMKALI SAHU (As Co. J) LNBH02021-220208005 & LNBH04322-230282183	7-Feb-24 Rs. 3505166/- & 6-Feb-24 Rs. 558489/-	PROPERTY OF KH.NO.910/9 SITUATED AT MAUZA VILLAGE-NAVAGARH P.H.NO.-2, RIC & TEHSIL-NAVAGARH, DISTRICT-BEMETARA (C.G.) 491001 Admeasuring 0.03hect.

Place : Jaipur Date : 12.02.2024 Authorised Officer Aavas Financiers Limited

Saxena grabs 9/68 as Bengal stare at second successive defeat

PTI ■ THUMBA (KERALA)


Domestic cricket stalwart Lalaj Saxena destroyed Bengal with career-best figures of 9/68 as the visitors found themselves on the brink of a second successive defeat in the Ranji Trophy Group B here on Sunday. Resuming on 172/8, Bengal managed to add just eight runs to their overnight total with the veteran all-rounder adding two more wickets to his name. The 37-year-old now has 439 wickets and has 6600-plus runs from 138 matches in first-class cricket. Despite a substantial lead, Kerala skipper Sanju Samson chose not to enforce follow-on and declared their second essay at 265/6 to set a massive 449-run target for the visitors. In reply, Bengal were 77/2 with Abhimanyu Easwaran batting on 33. Bengal had lost their last

match against Mumbai at Eden Gardens.

Khare slams fighting 143, but Mumbai hold edge
In Raipur, skipper Amandeep Khare led from the front with a stellar 143 as Chhattisgarh put up a strong fight, falling just one run short of Mumbai's first innings total of 351. From 180/4 overnight, Khare, who was unbeaten on 35, showed utmost patience in his composed knock from 211 balls. Mumbai kept taking wickets at one end but Khare stood firm and was the last man to get out. He struck 14 fours and four sixes. In reply, Mumbai were 97/1 at close on day three. With a lead of 98 runs, Mumbai seemed to be well-placed with Bhupen Lalwani and Amogh Bhatkal at the crease. Shubham Singh managed the only breakthrough for Chhattisgarh

in Mumbai's second innings when he dismissed Mumbai's first innings hero Prithvi Shaw, five runs short of a half-century. The Indian batter's 159 off 185 balls had powered Mumbai to 351. **Assam eyeing maiden win of season**
Veteran off-spinner Swarupam Purkayastha was the star performer with the ball, securing four wickets for just 11 runs, as Assam bundled out Bihar for 207 to take a huge first innings lead of 198 runs in Guwahati. Assam were quick to enforce the follow-on and reduced Bihar to 168/3 at close of play on the penultimate day. Opener Piyush Singh displayed resilience with an unbeaten 79 from 204, steering Bihar in their second essay. The visitors face a challenging task ahead, trailing by 30 runs

as Assam will be eyeing their first win of the season. Mukhtar Hussain, Rahul Singh and Mrinmoy Dutta picked up wicket apiece for Assam. **Brief Scores**
In Raipur: Mumbai 351 and 97/1; 28 overs (Prithvi Shaw 45, Bhupen Lalwani 40 batting). Chhattisgarh 350; 106.1 overs (Amandeep Khare 143, Shashank Chandrakar 56, Sanjeet Desai 41; Tushar Deshpande 5/121, Royston Dias 2/44). Mumbai lead by 98 runs. In Guwahati: Assam: 405. Bihar 207; 71.5 overs (Paramjeet Singh 53, Bipin Saurabh 39; Swarupam Purkayastha 4/11, Mukhtar Hussain 3/22) and following on 168/3; 61 overs (Piyush Singh 79 not out, Bipin Saurabh 44; Mukhtar Hussain 1/15, Rahul Singh 1/13). Bihar trails by 30 runs.

**PNB HOUSING FINANCE LIMITED**
CHIR KI BAAT

APPENDIX -IIV-A - E-AUCTION-PUBLIC SALE, NOTICE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTY/IES
E-AUCTION-SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE ASSETS UNDER THE SECURITISATION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF FINANCIAL ASSETS AND ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTEREST ACT, 2002 READ WITH PROVISIO TO RULE 8(6) OF THE SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT) RULES, 2002)
Reg. Office:- 9th Floor, Antriksh Bhawan, 22 Kasturba Gandhi Marg, New Delhi-110001, Phones:-011-23357171, 23357172, 23705414, Web:- www.pnbhousing.com

BRANCH OFFICE: OFFICE NO. 111-112, 1ST FLOOR, PLOT NO. 1, BLOCK NO. 9, DB CORPORATE PARK, RAJBANDHA MAIDAN, RAIPUR, CHHATTISGARH- 492001

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the borrower(s) & guarantor(s) indicated in Column no-A that the below described immovable property (ies) described in Column no-D mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the constructive/Physical Possession of which has been taken (as described in Column no-C) by the authorized Officer of M/s PNB Housing Finance Limited/Secured Creditor, will be sold on "AS IS WHERE IS, AS IS WHAT IS AND WHATEVER THERE IS BASIS" as per the details mentioned below.
Notice is hereby given to borrower(s)/mortgagor(s)/Legal Heirs, Legal Representative, (whether Known or Unknown), executor(s), administrator(s), successor(s), assignee(s) of the respective borrower(s)/ mortgagor(s)(since deceased) as the case may be indicated in Column no-A under Rule 8(6) & 9 of the Security Interest Enforcement Rules, 2002 amended as on date. For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided in M/s PNB Housing Finance Limited/secured creditor's website i.e. www.pnbhousing.com.

Loan No. Name of the Borrower/Co-Borrower /guarantor(s)/Legal heirs (A)	Demand Amount & Date (B)	Nature of possession (C)	Description of the Properties Mortgaged (D)	Reserve Price (RP) (E)	EMD (10% of RP) (F)	Last Date of Submission of Bid (G)	Bid Incremental Rate (H)	Inspection Date & Time (I)	Date of Auction & Time (J)	Known Encumbrances/ Court Case if any (K)
HOU/RAI/0219/647891 Sanket Sarawat / Kiran Tiwari B.O.: Raipur	Rs. 5,79,532.05 as on dated 26.10.2021	(Physical)	F-40, Sai Ashwini Pride City, S. No.1159, 1161, 1146, 1147, 1148, 1149, 1150, 1156/1, 1158, 1146/1647, P.H. No.81, Mouza Pacheda, Tehsil Arang, District Raipur, CG, Near Dishla College, Vidhan Sabha Road, Raipur, Chhattisgarh-492001	Rs. 3,56,000/-	Rs. 35,600/-	26.02.2024 before 04:00 PM	Rs. 10,000/-	15.02.2024 Between 12:00 PM to 04:00 PM	27.02.2024 Between 01:30 to 03:00 PM	*NIL/ Not Known
HOU/RAI/0616/294525 Rahul Bhatija /Amar Lal Bhatija B.O.: Raipur	Rs. 15,66,291.49 as on dated 28.07.2023	(Physical)	Part Of Kh No 562/75-76, Plot No 550 And 551, Geekay Township, Raipur Bilaspur Road, Siltara, Raipur, Chhattisgarh-495335	Rs. 5,59,000/-	Rs. 55,900/-	26.02.2024 before 04:00 PM	Rs. 10,000/-	12.02.2024 Between 12:00 PM to 04:00 PM	27.02.2024 Between 01:30 to 03:00 PM	*NIL/ Not Known
HOU/RAI/0719/726287 Nepal Bariha /Savita Bariha B.O.: Raipur	Rs. 8,19,846.47 as on dated 26.10.2021	(Physical)	C-14, Sai Ashwini Pride City - Phase III, Kharsa No. 1167/2, Phn 81/2, Village Pacheda, Tehsil Arang Distt Raipur, Arang, Chhattisgarh-494444	Rs. 6,05,000/-	Rs. 60,500/-	26.02.2024 before 04:00 PM	Rs. 10,000/-	16.02.2024 Between 12:00 PM to 04:00 PM	27.02.2024 Between 01:30 to 03:00 PM	*NIL/ Not Known

*"Together with the further interest @18% p.a. as applicable, incidental expenses, cost, charges etc. incurred upto the date of payment and/or realization thereof. ** To the best knowledge and information of the authorized Officer of PNB Housing Finance Limited, there are no other encumbrances/ claims in respect of above mentioned immovable/secured assets except what is disclosed in the Column No.-K. Further such encumbrances to be catered/paid by the successful purchaser/bidder at his/her end. The prospective purchaser(s)/ bidders are requested to independently ascertain the veracity of the mentioned encumbrances.
(1.) As on date, there is no order restraining and/or court injunction PNBHFL/the authorized Officer of PNBHFL from selling, alienating and/or disposing of the above immovable properties/secured assets and status is mentioned in column no-K (2.) The prospective purchaser/bidder and interested parties may independently take the inspection of the pleading in the proceedings/orders passed etc. if any, stated in column no-K. Including but not limited to the title of the documents of the title pertaining thereto available with the PNBHFL and satisfy themselves in all respects prior to submitting tender/bid application form or making Offer(s). The bidder(s) has to sign the terms and conditions of this auction along with the Bid Form. (3.) Please note that in terms of Rule 9(3) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, the bidder(s)/the purchaser is legally bound to deposit 25% of the amount of sale price, (inclusive of earnest money) on the same day or not later than next working day. The sale may be confirmed in favour of (bidder(s) only after receipt of 25% of the sale price by the secured creditor in accordance with Rule 9(2) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. The remaining 75% of the s sale consideration amount has to be deposited by the purchaser within 15 days' from the date of acknowledgement of sale confirmation letter and in default of such deposit, the authorized officer shall forfeit the part payment of sale consideration amount within 15 days from the date of expiry of mandatory period of 15 days mentioned in the sale confirmation letter and the property/secured asset shall be resold as per the provisions of Sarfaesi Act. (4.) M/s C1 India Private Limited would be assisting the Authorised officer in conducting sale through an e-Auction having its Corporate office at Plot No. 68, 3rd Floor, Sector 44, Gurgaon, Haryana 122003 Website-www.bankauctions.com For any assistance related to inspection of the property or obtaining the Bid Documents and for any other query or for registration, you have to co-ordinate with Mr. Rajeev Chandra Toll Free No.: 1800 120 8800, E-Mail: auction@pnbhousing.com, is authorised Person of PNBHFL or refer to www.pnbhousing.com.
PLACE:- RAIPUR, DATE:-10.02.2024

SD/- AUTHORIZED OFFICER, PNB HOUSING FINANCE LIMITED



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